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ABSTRACT

The Media Ethics Division of the proceedings contains the following 10 papers: "Punctuation and Epistemic Honesty: Do Photos Need What Words Have?" (Scott Fosdick and Shahira Fahmy); "A Bellwether in Media Accountability: The Work of the New York 'World's' Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play" (Neil Nemeth); "Eight Arguments for the Importance of Philosophical Thinking in Journalism Ethics" (Hendrik Overduin); "An Examination of Diversity Issues at Southeast Journalism Conference Newspapers" (Kathleen Woodruff Wickham, Amanda Elkin, Sarah S. Hollis, Scarlet Lawrence, Sandra Knispel, Jamee Smith, and Marty Russell); "Balancing News Reporting with National Security in an Age of Terrorism" (David Cuillier); "Bad Apples or Rotten Culture?: Media Discourse on the Corporate Scandals of 2001 and 2002" (David A. Craig and Kristina K. Turner); "Conflicted Interests, Contested Terrain: Journalism Ethics Codes Then and Now" (Lee Wilkins and Bonnie Brennen); "A Gang of Pecksniffs Grows Up: The Evolution of Journalism Ethics Discourse in 'The Journalist' and 'Editor and Publisher'" (Patrick Lee Plaisance); "Questions of Judgment in the Newsroom: A Journalistic Instrumental-Value Theory for Media Ethics" (Patrick Lee Plaisance); and "Perry Meets Freire: Moral Development's 'Leap of Faith' in the Classroom" (Maggie Jones Patterson and Matthew Gropp). (RS)

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CS 512 494

Punctuation and Epistemic Honesty:
Do Photos Need What Words Have?

by

Scott Fosdick, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Journalism
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211-1200
573/882-3496
Fosdicks@missouri.edu

and

Shahira Fahmy
Doctoral Candidate
School of Journalism
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211-1200
fahmys@mizzou.edu

Submitted for consideration by the Media Ethics Division of AEJMC for presentation at the 2003 convention in Kansas City.

Punctuation and Epistemic Honesty: Do Photos Need What Words Have?

Abstract

This research notes the similarities between the ethical debates surrounding the proper use of quotations and digital photography and seeks to incorporate them into a larger discussion of the ethics of sampling reality. Interviews with editors at *US News and World Report*, *The Sunday New York Times Magazine*, and *Esquire* reveal:

- internalized ethical positions that draw nothing from formal codes of ethics
- disagreement over the proper way to set-up a reconstructed quotation
- disagreement over whether readers understand when photographs have been enhanced
- no discussion of these issues between different types of editors
- and no support for the adoption of an icon or "photation marks" to serve as the visual equivalent of the quotation mark.

The history of the quotation mark is seen as a guideline in the effort to clearly identify products of the still-young field of photography. The authors argue that news practitioners should consider replacing *Truth* with *Honesty* as their guiding light when presenting samples of reality.

Punctuation and Epistemic Honesty:
Do Photos Need What Words Have?

Introduction

No allegation is more serious to a mainstream journalist than that he has lied, that he knew what the truth was and consciously altered or obscured or misrepresented it. The public forgives journalists who simply make mistakes. There is little forgiveness, however, for someone who has found a fact and willfully twisted it.

Of all the reasons that people find to vilify journalists, none is more damning than the revelation that one has fabricated a quotation or a photographic image. The reasons are simple and fairly obvious. Although the public might understand that quotes are not always accurate and that computers are quite capable of merging and distorting images, the essential nature of quotations and photographs are the same: They imply a claim on reality. When a journalist quotes a source, he or she is promising that the words are not merely a paraphrase, but are the very words used. And unless there are clear indications otherwise, the default assumption is that a photograph also promises a slice of reality. To promise is not necessarily to be believed (ask any Lothario, any politician), but that does not alter the status of quotations and photographs as promises. In an age when lying is so easy, the promises we keep are that much more valuable.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the use of quotations and the treatment of digital images figure prominently in discussions of journalism ethics, and in the codes that are the result of these discussions. What is surprising, however, is that they are invariably treated as utterly distinct issues. The word people debate the ethical use of words and the picture people debate proper and improper photo editing techniques. That is how the issues have evolved in the academic setting. But how does this play out on the front lines of journalism? This study uses qualitative interviews of leading magazine editors to look for intersecting spheres of concern between the photo editor and the copy editor. In place of parallel discussions of the ethics of presenting quotations and photos as accurate samples of reality, might we make greater progress by considering the two together? Can one field learn from the other? For example, do photographers suffer because they do not have at their disposal the visual equivalent of the quotation mark? If we compare and combine the ethical convictions of these editors, might we arrive at larger ethical principles, principles that could prove useful for other platforms -- such as radio and television -- as well as for communication technologies not yet invented? Is there, perhaps, an epistemological imperative that might guide all journalists in the ethical sampling of reality? By beginning this discussion among leading magazine editors, the authors hope to spark a larger consideration of the issues among visual and textual journalists and scholars.

Theory

In the world-wide context of the new information age, ethical dilemmas arise regarding information transfer (Buchanan, 2002). Since Plato and Aristotle, ethics has been a subject of attention from media scholars. Media scholars agree that if the mass media are to function properly in a society, then both freedom and social responsibility are important (Gordon *et al.*, 1999).

The social responsibility theory emerged to suggest an obligation "to provide a truthful, balanced and comprehensive account of news" (Hutleng, 1985, p. 11). Merrill (1999) writes: "Ethical concern is important, for it forces the media person to make commitments and thoughtful decisions among alternatives" (Merrill, 1999, p. 3). He explains that media ethics focuses on duty to self and duty to others regarding actions taken by media practitioners. Media practitioners echo an ethical media perspective. They believe in ethical performance and standards of responsible journalism (Hutleng, 1985).

In seeking behavioral guidelines, Hutleng (1985) cites two historical norms as relevant to media ethics. One is Aristotle's golden mean, which suggests ethical behavior should be middle range, between scales that run from excess at one extreme to deficiency at the other. The second -- an outgrowth, perhaps, of Kant's categorical imperative -- is seeking a decision that would result in the maximum benefit for society. However, despite serious efforts to follow ethical guidelines, there tend to be a wide variation in practice as few ethical decisions are "clear cut" and "uncomplicated" (Hutleng, 1985, p. 2).

The literature of media accuracy

Accuracy is defined as the extent to which the media portray an issue as it really is. Communication scholars explain it as "a truthful reproduction of an event or activity of public interest" (Blankenburg, 1970, p. 376), "the extent to which a message produces agreement between source and receiver," (Tichenor *et al.*, 1970, p. 673), and, in negative terms, "the deviation of a reported observation of an event from the reality or the truth of the event" (Lawrence & Grey, 1969, p. 753).

Many perceive accuracy to be the foundation of media credibility (Maier, 1999). Meyer's (1988) credibility index includes "accuracy" as one of five items on the believability scale. Media accuracy is a key component of the larger concept of credibility. If media coverage is perceived as inaccurate, it would be hard for the receivers to trust the media to convey reliable information.

The value of accuracy often takes a back seat to the richer and more complex value of truth, to which it is closely related. It is clear, however, that both concepts rank highly in any list of journalistic values. In the late 1990s, twenty-five prominent journalists formed the Committee of Concerned Journalists and conducted a series of symposia, more than 100 qualitative interviews with journalists and editors, and a variety of surveys of media consumers and producers. Based on that activity, the committee's chair, Bill Kovach, collaborated with the director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, Tom Rosenstiel, on a book, "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect." Kovach and Rosenstiel identified the core values of journalism. The first and most important of these is truth.

> This desire that information be truthful is elemental. Since news is the material that people use to learn and think about the world beyond themselves, the most important quality is that it be usable and reliable (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, p. 37-38).

Whatever truth is -- and it is a slippery concept, the "most confusing principle," according to Kovach and Rosenstiel -- it depends on accuracy at a basic level. Yes, truth can be elusive, Kovach and Rosenstiel confirm, when journalists twist it by reporting only select, misleading details, even when those details are conveyed with comple[illegible]uracy.

> This, however, does not mean that accuracy doesn't matter. On the contrary, it is the foundation upon which everything else builds: context, interpretation, debate, and all of public communication (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, p. 43).

Indeed, "getting the facts right" was listed as important by 100 percent of the journalists in a study conducted by the Committee of Concerned Journalists and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (CCJ and Pew March 1999). The study suggests news staff are aware of a concerted effort by their companies to address ethics. The majority of media professionals express satisfaction with efforts to address ethical issues by their news organizations.

When accuracy is seen to be such a revered value, the quotation takes on added significance as the one place in which journalists seem to be promising that they are especially accurate. Quotation marks promise not just a paraphrase, but the actual words of the source. So it is odd to note that very little research appears to have been conducted on the accuracy of quotations. Every reporting textbook underlines the importance of keeping one's quotes accurate. Why, then, are there not surveys of accuracy, regular checks on how journalists are doing when it comes to quotations?[1]

Perhaps the answer is that the issue seems beyond reasonable debate: Everyone knows that quotes should be accurate. Everyone knows that good journalists and good journals are careful about this, and that bad journalists and supermarket tabloids are not. Where there is no controversy, no underlying theoretical construct to probe, there is little academic interest. And yet, there is evidence that the proper use of quotes is not a completely settled issue. Journalists often struggle with the question of whether and how thoroughly to clean up the quotes of those who do not speak in perfect paragraphs (that is, most of us), who cough or clear their throats, who correct themselves or rephrase in mid-sentence. There is also debate over the ethics of intentionally using fractured speech in quotations when one is trying to convey a sense of personality in a feature story.[2]

The reconstructed story, a form that has found increased use in magazines recently, often involves reconstructed quotes, which raise an ethical question: How should the writer set up a quote that he or she did not hear? A heated discussion of this issue raged briefly at the 2000 convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) in Phoenix. During a panel on teaching long-form magazine writing, David Hayes, a successful magazine writer and teacher at Ryerson University in Toronto, was talking about writing reconstructed scenes in the manner of fiction. If, for example, everyone at a meeting including the speaker agreed that the speaker had uttered a certain phrase or sentence, Hayes said he felt confident in simply writing, *So-and-so said*, followed by the quote in quotation marks. Other professors, on and off the panel, objected strongly. *People in the room agree that so-and-so said* should precede the quote itself, many felt, even if that clutters the narrative and lessens the impact. Hayes maintained that a room full of people agreeing on a quote is bound to be more reliable than if the reporter had in fact been in the room taking notes. The conversation eventually moved on to other topics without being resolved.[3]

James B. Stewart, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and former editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, lends depth to this controversy in his popular text, Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Nonfiction:

> The convention that a writer is always present to witness what is reported has given rise to many of the controversies surrounding literary nonfiction. Does describing a place imply that the writer was there at the moment described? Does dialogue imply that the writer overheard the remarks at the time they were made? Some advocates of traditional nonfiction writing would argue in both cases that it does; in that case, the result is false, and it crosses an inviolable line between fiction and nonfiction. (Stewart 1998, p. 301)

Stewart himself does not hew to the traditional boundary, but clearly many do. The issue remains unsettled, and ripe for research.

Photographs, like quotations, also promise an accurate depiction of reality, and, again like quotes, are open to manipulation and fabrication. Here, however, much more research has been done, perhaps because photography is a relatively young form of communication, and the perfection of techniques of electronic editing did not come about until the 1990s. Opinion is more or less settled on the matter of making up quotes. While clever photographers have manipulated images in the darkroom almost from the dawn of the medium, the advent of Photoshop and similar programs have made it possible for the decidedly un-clever to create fabulous falsehoods with digital or digitally scanned photographs. That led to a flurry of research in the 1990's that has tapered off somewhat in recent years.

Digital imaging is not in itself evil. On the contrary, it has decided advantages, despite the opportunities it offers for questionable manipulation. Fahmy and Smith (2002) studied ways in which digital imaging affects the news environment in relationship to the production of images, storage, flexibility, interpersonal relationships, autonomy and control over photographs. They found that digital imaging allows for extended deadlines; photojournalists can delete and transmit photographs from location; the technology offers -- to many -- a chance to take part in the picture editing process; photojournalists making picture-editing decisions are becoming more aware of their images and more perceptive in their conversations with picture editors; the new technology may enhance and increase information sharing in the newsroom, and although photographers may leave assignments earlier and many may shoot less, at least they will have a better idea if they have a usable image. In sum, Fahmy and Smith found that the benefits of digital imaging exceed the drawbacks.

Nevertheless, some have noted evidence that the use of digital alteration in some publications threatens the power of photography in all publications. Tirol (2000) found that while there were great differences in the attitudes toward and use of digital techniques between editors at tabloid versus broadsheet newspapers, there is reason to believe readers don't make a distinction between the two:

> The alteration of the means of production of a product traditionally used to represent verifiable experience may serve the purpose of shifting the audience's view of that product. (Tirol 2000, p. 350)

That shift is one away from trust and toward skepticism. In a recent study regarding the uses of digitally altered photographs, Huang (2001) examined how much readers trust digital images in documentary contexts. Results suggest respondents expect the media to let them know if a digitally altered image is used. Huang also found that, "So far, few magazines or newspapers have used a sign or symbol to indicate that an altered image was used in a documentary context" (179). Based on the finding that awareness plays a big part in acceptance of digital-imaging alterations, the author suggests the media should reconsider their current policy of using digital alterations without making it known to the readers. Along a similar line of research, Greer and Gosen (2002) examined the level of alteration that affects public attitudes toward a digitally manipulated news photograph in particular and the news media in general. Results suggest increasing levels of digital alteration leads to lower credibility levels for photographs.

Method

This qualitative study uses interviews with the following: Bronwen Latimer, Director of Photography, *U.S. News & World Report*. Robert Grover, chief of the news desk, *U.S. News & World Report*. Kathy Ryan, Photo Editor, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*. Katherine Bouton, Deputy Editor, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*. John Kenney, Managing Editor, *Esquire*. Kenney said he decides ethical issues involving both quotations and photographs at *Esquire*. Kenney's and Bouton's interviews were conducted by e-mail. Latimer's was conducted in person. Ryan and Grover were interviewed by telephone. The interviews were conducted in 2002.

Since we are interested both in how ethical decisions are made in the field and in the question of ethical leadership, it seemed appropriate to select subjects who are responsible for day-to-day ethical decisions involving quotations and images at some of the nation's leading magazines. In short, we wanted people at the top of their field, editors whose opinions command considerable respect. We were interested less in those who wrote the code of ethics for a publication than those who might be expected to enforce or put into use the code of ethics. We concentrated on magazines because it is in magazines that one finds the most creative use of photography and of narrative writing, particularly reconstructions. By selecting pairs of editors at top publications, we increased the chances that we could find a degree of interaction between parallel discussions of ethical issues involving quotations and images. We selected magazines that ranged from a primary orientation of news to literary journalism and lifestyle, thereby increasing the chances we would find a variety of views toward quotation and image. *U.S. News and World Report* was selected because of its reputation as the most straightforward of the major news magazines, the one least tainted by controversies over such things as manipulation of cover photographs. The *Sunday New York Times Magazine* is both a highly artistic product and, through its connection to the *New York Times*, a magazine that might be influenced by one of the most detailed and specific codes of ethics. *Esquire* was chosen primarily because it is the venue of some of the most adventuresome experiments in narrative journalism, but also because of the attention is pays to the display of photographs and photo illustrations of various types. Together, these three are respected for what they do, even while what they do varies considerably.

Interviewees were first contacted via telephone or e-mail. Respondents could answer via e-mail or be telephoned on a specific date and time. Interviews follow a semi-structured approach. Photo editors and word editors were asked similar questions, with some differences related to their job responsibility; the *Esquire* editor, who served both functions, was given questions from a combined list (see Appendix). Follow-up questions were asked when appropriate.

One of the debates surrounding the treatment of sources in journalism is whether they should be allowed to remain anonymous. Some argue that anonymity increases the likelihood of honesty: I am not apt to tell you what I really think about my tedious minister unless I am confident she won't find out I am the one who said it. Most, however, hold that anonymous sources are a bad idea: Not only does it allow falsehoods without consequences, it prevents the reader from considering the perspective of the source. In this study, we chose not to promise anonymity, and told our interview subjects upfront that we intended to quote them. (We would have made that clear whether the Institutional Review Board required it or not.) All of our sources are editors at leading magazines, but each magazine has its own history, and offers a different perspective on the world. In a qualitative interview, it seems valuable to consider the source.

Findings

Individually, the interviews yielded a number of interesting statements, opinions, and attitudes toward quotation and photography. Together, they yielded five main findings:

1. **Ethics Codes:** Editors were either unaware their publication had one, were sure they did not, or said the publication had one but that they had not consulted it in years. In any case, it is clear that despite the attention paid to them by the people who write them and by the academy, ethics codes are not treated as powerful documents by the journalists actually making decisions about quotations and photography at these magazines. That does not mean editors do not have standards or do not understand the choices they must make. Rather, it seems clear that they take full responsibility for understanding and putting into practice a consistent ethical posture. In any case, each is able to articulate a clear point of view on the subject.

"I am quite aware of what we will and will not do." -- Bronwen Latimer, *U.S. News & World Report*.

"...I have worked here a long time, so...I have a pretty good idea of our code of ethics." – Kathy Ryan, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*.

"The *Times* DOES [Bouton's caps] have a written code of ethics, which I had simply forgotten existed ... The policy on quotations is just as I explained it. This statement is given to all new staffers (which is why I'd forgotten about it ... [Bouton's ellipses] I was hired in 1988, a long time ago). By coincidence, it was redistributed to all staffers this week." -- Katherine Bouton, in a note e-mailed to the authors two weeks after she had written, in her initial e-mail response to our questionnaire, that she did not know of a written code of ethics at *The New York Times Magazine*.

2. **Reconstructed Quotes:** There was disagreement on the proper way to set up a quote in a reconstruction; not surprisingly, *U.S. News & World Report* favored the longer, more explicit method. *Esquire* does not require this, although it is careful to make clear earlier in the story what the sources are.

"...we'll be sure, through various means, not to inadvertently mislead readers into thinking a writer was a firsthand witness to events or statements when such was not the case." -- John Kenney, *Esquire*.

3. **Reader perceptions:** Editors feel their readers are quite aware of the possibilities of digital alteration, if not the techniques themselves. Editors disagree, however, about whether readers can accurately judge by context whether or not a photo has been enhanced.

"…the accusations, they are a little bit over the top, because you don't manipulate photographs, and the expectation is that we do. And that's a little bit unnerving." -- Bronwen Latimer, *U.S. News & World Report*.

"I think that the audience is very sophisticated visually today, but everybody has a different knowledge of photography." – Kathy Ryan, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*.

"Most readers, we feel sure, expect that news photos will be altered only negligibly or not at all. It's hard to say for certain, but we believe that readers understand that some manipulation is done to other, more stylized or abstract photographs in *Esquire*." – John Kenney, *Esquire*.

4. **Border-crossing interchange:** There is no discussion of these issues between the photo side and the copy editing side. They might discuss captions, but the photo people decide whether and how to alter photographs, and the word people keep control of the quotations.

5. **Icon of Authenticity:** Do photographers need a visual equivalent to the quotation mark? One editor had no opinion; all others were opposed to the idea of "a visual equivalent of the quotation mark, say a small icon in the upper right-hand corner." If there had to be a visual icon, most preferred one to indicate alteration as opposed to one to indicate no alteration. (That would work in the opposite way of a quotation mark; it would be more of a visual *paraphrase* mark.) In any case, the idea of a visual icon intruding on the space of an un-enhanced photo was met with near-universal opposition.

"…we would have to put this for every single picture, so why even put it in." -- Bronwen Latimer, *U.S. News & World Report*.

"I think it is better to have the assumption if there is nothing indicating otherwise the photograph is exact, exact reproduction, then if you have done any kind of change then you make that clear in the caption or the photo credit." –Robert Grover, *U.S. News & World Report*.

"What it would do, we look at the page and would it just seem so overboard because you see it all the time.... Day to day, the judgment call, it's not as clear... OK, with the quotations, it is either a quote from somebody or it is not, but if you're putting on an icon, does it go with posed portraits done in a studio? They are lit, they are posed, sometimes they are styled. Does it go strictly with documentary photography?" – Kathy Ryan, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*.

"I don't really have an opinion about this." – Katherine Bouton, *Sunday New York Times Magazine*.

"No." – John Kenney, *Esquire*.

Discussion

The larger issues of this study hinge, to a degree, on the distinction between accuracy and truth. It is, of course, possible to achieve mere accuracy without coming near the truth: the quote taken out of context; the close-up photo of the one person caught laughing at a funeral. It is also possible to achieve truth without accuracy: the worlds of fiction and art, not to mention art photography, succeed at this with some regularity. After considering the views of the editors in this study, we would suggest that Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) were correct to put Truth high on the list of journalistic values, but that perhaps there is a value they do not mention in their book that deserves consideration for the top spot: Honesty.

As a group, our magazine editors did not unanimously proclaim that photos should never be digitally enhanced, that quotes should never be cleaned up in any way, or that reconstructed quotes must be introduced in a proscribed way. They did not promise a slavish accuracy. Instead, they expressed a universal determination to seek truth, the fullest, fairest and most expressive truth possible.

And yet, truth is hardly a reasonable goal for journalists. It cannot be practically tested or measured. What journalist can ever say with full confidence that he or she has delivered the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Like the North Star, truth can be our guide, but we will never reach it.

Indeed, when we examined the details of what these editors told us, time and time again they were most careful to make clear that it was not *what* they did with quotes and photos that mattered most, but how they made clear to the reader what he or she was looking at. That isn't truth -- although it points us toward truth. And it isn't always accuracy. It is honesty.

Readers want amazing stories and startling photographs. They want literal accuracy and they want artistic expression, the lie that tells the truth. If, as has been said so often, reality is constructed, readers want to author their own versions. Quotations and stories and photographs and photo-illustrations -- the grand flux of mediated matter that flows through our lives -- are the building materials we all rely on. If media constructs reality, each of us reconstructs it. Like any good carpenter, we want to know our materials are sound. We cannot expect journalists to hand us truth in a neat package, and we do not always want mere accuracy. But we can and should demand honesty.

In the field, choices involving the use of quotations and photos often involve two determinations:

1. What do we do with the words and images we have taken from the world?
2. How do we let the reader *know* what we have done with these words and images?

The second question is all about honesty. In this regard, the word people have a tool the image people lack: The quotation mark. Lacking that mark, words attributed to a source are presumed to be an approximation, a re-phrasing of the source's words by the writer. Within quotation marks, words take on a special immediacy the moment we read them; one mark appears just before the words, letting us imagine the source saying them, and one mark appears afterward, returning us to the writer's voice. No words in a caption can function in the same way, unless we somehow manage to train people to read captions first. The more extraordinary the photo, the more likely we are to assume it has been altered. So the initial impact -- that important moment when our eyes first see and our minds try to comprehend -- has been muted by the cynicism we have been trained to hold for photographs. Who but those inflicted with Alzheimer's can see something twice for the first time? As things stand now at our most respected magazines, we expect the reader to look at a picture, then read the caption and note that it lacks the disclaimer "photo illustration," and finally look back at the picture and see it for what it really is. Wouldn't it be preferable to devise a way that readers could instantly and effortlessly recognize when a photo meets a certain standard?

Clearly, the editors we queried do not like the idea of an icon imposed on a photo, whether to indicate enhancement or an agreed-upon degree of purity. After completing the survey, we wondered if there might be a simpler, more direct, and less intrusive way that people who work with photographs could develop punctuation to convey the same kind of claim that writers make when they use quotation marks. We came up with what we will call the *photation mark*. This mark would appear outside the frame of the photograph: A photo editor, copy editor or designer would put a thin rule around one or more corners of the photo -- say the upper corners, or the upper left and lower right corners -- to indicate a kind of visual quotation had taken place. We expect that much of what our editors found objectionable with the idea of an icon was that it might interfere significantly with the image. The photation mark could be as thick and visible or as thin and inconspicuous as the publication's designer chooses. We asked a designer to create a mock-up of a magazine page using an understated version of the photation mark (a copy is in the appendix). Then we went back to the editors in our study and asked their opinion. They still did not like it, finding it either too subtle or too intrusive.

One *New York Times* editor did not want any mark intruding on the page; the other *New York Times* editor thought it was too inconspicuous to have any impact at all, and also assumed that the mark indicated *alteration*, not lack of alteration. Bob Grover of *U.S. News and World Report* thought confusion would be the only result: "I think readers would be at best bewildered by them."

The *U.S. News and World Report* photo editor, Bronwen Latimer, wrote in an e-mail:

> My initial reaction is that photation marks will be mistaken as a design element rather than an editorial acknowledgement. I missed them entirely the first time I looked at the picture. I believe that the credit is the viable place to alert the reader something has been altered. That way the type of alteration is spelled out for those who are curious, professional or non-professional.

No doubt any new form of punctuation would look strange for quite some time. It would take some getting used to. It might even take a public education effort. We aren't born knowing what quotation marks mean; somewhere along a line, a parent or teacher taught us how to read them. The same would be true of photation marks, if they are to catch on. Eventually, though, we might reach the point where we could read photos effortlessly. It is unlikely that the first use of the quotation mark was either universally understood or accepted. The quotation mark as we know it was not standardized until the 19th century. Earlier versions included the *diple,* which, in the Middle Ages, was primarily used to indicate holy scripture. When the printing press was introduced, the *diple* was replaced by *guillemets*. Since much of the earliest writing was dictated to a scribe, all writing therefore was a transcription of speech, so a mark indicating quotation might have been problematic. In other words, early on, all writing was assumed to be a direct quotation. Interestingly, early in the history of photography, all photos were considered to be direct samples of light. It was only when *non*-quotations and *non*-photos came about that there arose the need to mark the distinction. (Parkes 1993.)

It might not be easy to define what should get the photation mark and what should not. Debate is inevitable, just as there is an ongoing discussion involving what one may put between quotation marks, and what those marks promise to the reader. But just because quotation marks are sometimes problematic does not mean that they should be abandoned. In the main, they are a powerful tool for any writer, and especially for the journalist.

Lacking such a tool, photographers and photo editors must depend on their reputations, or the reputations of the publications for which they work, to cue the reader as to the possibilities of a photo that carries no "photo-illustration" or "composite" line. This situation robs photos of their power. And the photos most damaged by this situation could be the ones that are in one sense the most honest.

The editors we queried believe that readers have grown to trust their presentation of photographs, so it is not surprising that they do not feel the need of new punctuation to assert the honesty of their images. They might be right (although further research on this is needed). However justified editors at the most respected magazines are in their opinions, what of the editors at smaller, newer magazines that have not yet established a reputation with readers? Would they be more likely to embrace new punctuation to allow them to make distinctions between different classes of photographs? Future research might expand the scope of this study to include editors from a broader range of publications. It might also find ways to gauge how quickly readers might adapt to new visual punctuation.

Epistemology is the study of the basis of knowledge – not what is true, but how we come to *know* truth. This is a field often visited by journalism scholars. We would urge ethicists to move beyond the study of epistemic truth and consider epistemic honesty: not what is honest, but how we come to know what is honest. Before we can determine if a statement is honest we must establish the nature of the claim: Is the person purporting to give a thoroughly accurate statement, or is he or she only offering an approximation, perhaps an improvement on the original for purposes of clarity or art? Centuries of paraphrasing and quotation led to the common use of punctuation to make a clear distinction between the two. Although there is much disagreement over the use of the quotation mark, no writer would want to abandon that tool. It allows him or her to be clear about what he or she is claiming to have heard or read. It does not guarantee honesty, but it allows for greater precision in one's claim to be making an honest report. It lends power to the honest writer, and leaves the dishonest writer with less weasel room. (If the quotation mark did not exist, it would be more difficult to accuse a writer of misquoting.) This is a power photography might not have needed its infancy, when the public took every image at face value. Today's public is not nearly so trusting. It is precisely this lack of trust, this skepticism, that diminishes the power of photography.

Photographs do seem to need what words have. But until that need is more sharply felt by people in a position to do something about it, the distrust engendered by manipulated images will most likely continue to erode the power of our most honest images.

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Appendix

Questionnaire One:

For editors who are responsible for establishing and enforcing writing policy (regarding, for example, the use of quotations).

start:
Thanks for doing this. When we're done, I'll tell you more about the study, and answer any questions you may have.

1. We are researching journalistic guidelines involving the proper use of quotations and digital alteration or enhancement of photos. I'd like to ask you a few questions. Current federal regulations require that I assure you that your participation is voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any question, and that you may end the interview at any time. This is *not* a confidential interview; one focus of this project is rules journalists follow about attribution; we plan to quote people directly. With your permission, I will also record our conversation to ensure accuracy. This shouldn't take more than 10 or 15 minutes, depending on how much you have to say. Do you understand, and do I have your permission to record?
[turn on tape recorder]
2. Thank you. I have turned on the recorder. What is your name and title?

3. To your knowledge, does your publication have an official code of ethics?

4. If yes: Is it a document you regularly consult? Why or why not?

5. Is there a general principle you follow when it comes to deciding how to handle quotes, for example, to what extent you will clean up bad grammar, random noises like throat clearing, repeated words, stuttering, "uhs" and the like, and whether you will use ellipses when deleting words, phrases or sentences?

6. Can you articulate an underlying principle?

7. What is it?

8. My next question involves the use of quotations in reconstructions, the kind of reporting where the writer did not witness an event but is piecing it together in narrative fashion based on transcripts, tape recordings, or the reports of people who were there. How do you deal with quotations in circumstances where the writer was not present?

9. For example, if five people attend a meeting, and all them agree that one of them stood up and said something, will you permit a writer who was not there to quote those words in the midst of a narrative, like this: Jane Smith stood up and said, QUOTE, I support the proposal, END QUOTE. Or would you require the writer to write something like this: Participants, including Jane Smith herself, agree that she stood up and said, QUOTE, I support the proposal, END QUOTE.

10. Do you think your typical reader understands the difference between these two ways of handling a reconstructed quote?

11. Does the reader's understanding of how quotes are used make any difference in your decisions?

12. Could you amplify on that?

13. Do you ever discuss these issues with photographers or photo editors?

[if yes]14. Has their experience influenced your choices? [if yes:] In what way?

15. Writers use quotation marks to indicate that they are offering a sample of reality that is largely unchanged. Do you think photography might benefit from a similar indication to the reader claiming that the photo is largely unchanged, a visual equivalent of the quotation mark, say a small icon in the upper right-hand corner?

16. If you had to choose, which would be better, an icon promising no significant alteration or an icon indicating alteration?

17. Is there anyone in the business anywhere that you consider a leader when it comes to thinking about these issues, someone we should talk to? Do you have contact information for him/her?

18. I am required to tell you that the name of this study is "The Epistemology of Pixels and Quotations" and that you may at any time contact the Institutional Review Board at 573/882-9585. Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions about this study?

Questionnaire Two, for photo editors

start:
Thanks for doing this. When we're done, I'll tell you more about the study, and answer any questions you may have.

1. We are researching journalistic guidelines involving the proper use of quotations and digital alteration or enhancement of photos. I'd like to ask you a few questions. Current federal regulations require that I assure you that your participation is voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any question, and that you may end the interview at any time. This is *not* a confidential interview; one focus of this project is rules journalists follow about attribution; we plan to quote people directly. With your permission, I will also record our conversation to assure accuracy. This shouldn't take more than 10 or 15 minutes, depending on how much you have to say. Do you understand, and do I have your permission to record?
[turn on tape recorder]
2. Thank you. I have turned on the recorder. What is your name and title?

3. To your knowledge, does your publication have an official code of ethics?

4. If yes: Is it a document you regularly consult? Why or why not?

5. Is there a general principle you follow when it comes to deciding how to handle photos, for example, to what extent you will correct for color, lighten or darken skin tone or erase blemishes, dodge in corners, eliminate random distractions, combine images, et cetera?

6. Can you articulate an underlying principle?

7. What is it?

8. What standard or expectation do you think your typical reader brings to your work, regarding the degree of alteration a photo might have undergone? [If they don't understand the question, say: For example, when they look at a photo in your magazine, do you think they expect that it has or has not been altered digitally in any way?]

9. Do you think your typical reader understands the difference between the various degrees of enhancement or alteration of photos?

10. Does the reader's understanding of these issues make any difference in your decisions?

11. Could you amplify on that?

12. Do you ever discuss these issues with copy editors?

[if yes]13. Has their experience influenced your choices? [if yes:] In what way?

14. Writers use quotation marks to indicate that they are offering a sample of reality that is largely unchanged. Do you think photography might benefit from a similar indication to the reader claiming that the photo is largely unchanged, a visual equivalent of the quotation mark, say a small icon in the upper right-hand corner?

15. If you had to choose, which would be better, an icon promising no significant alteration or an icon indicating alteration?

16. Is there anyone in the business anywhere that you consider a leader when it comes to thinking about these issues, someone we should talk to? Do you have contact information for him/her?

17. I am required to tell you that the name of this study is "The Epistemology of Pixels and Quotations" and that you may at any time contact the Institutional Review Board at 573/882-9585. Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions about this study?

END

Questionnaire three for combined word/photo editors
(Such as John Kenney at Esquire)

start:
Thanks for doing this. When we're done, I'll tell you more about the study, and answer any questions you may have.

1. We are researching journalistic guidelines involving the proper use of quotations and digital alteration or enhancement of photos. I'd like to ask you a few questions. Current federal regulations require that I assure you that your participation is voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any question, and that you may end the interview at any time. This is *not* a confidential interview; one focus of this project is rules journalists follow about attribution; we plan to quote people directly. With your permission, I will also record our conversation to ensure accuracy. This shouldn't take more than **15 or 20** minutes, depending on how much you have to say. Do you understand, and do I have your permission to record?
[turn on tape recorder]
2. Thank you. I have turned on the recorder. What is your name and title?

3. To your knowledge, does your publication have an official code of ethics?

4. If yes: Is it a document you regularly consult? Why or why not?

5. Is there a general principle you follow when it comes to deciding how to handle photos, for example, to what extent you will correct for color, lighten or darken skin tone or erase blemishes, dodge in corners, eliminate random distractions, combine images, et cetera?

6. Can you articulate an underlying principle?

7. What is it?

8. Is there a general principle you follow when it comes to deciding how to handle **quotes**, for example, to what extent you will clean up bad grammar, random noises like throat clearing, repeated words, stuttering, "uhs" and the like, and whether you will use ellipses when deleting words, phrases or sentences?

9. Can you articulate an underlying principle?

10. What is it?

11. My next question involves the use of quotations in reconstructions, the kind of reporting where the writer did not witness an event but is piecing it together in narrative fashion based on transcripts, tape recordings, or the reports of people who were there. How do you deal with quotations in circumstances where the writer was not present?

12. For example, if five people attend a meeting, and all them agree that one of them stood up and said something, will you permit a writer who was not there to quote those words in the midst

of a narrative, like this: Jane Smith stood up and said, QUOTE, I support the proposal, END QUOTE. Or would you require the writer to write something like this: Participants, including Jane Smith herself, agree that she stood up and said, QUOTE, I support the proposal, END QUOTE.

13. Do you think your typical reader understands the difference between these two ways of handling a reconstructed quote?

14. Does the reader's understanding of how quotes are used make any difference in your decisions?

15. Could you amplify on that?

16. What standard or expectation do you think your typical reader brings to your work, regarding the degree of alteration a **photo** might have undergone? [If they don't understand the question, say: For example, when they look at a photo in your magazine, do you think they expect that it has or has not been altered digitally in any way?]

17. Do you think your typical reader understands the difference between the various degrees of enhancement or alteration of photos?

18. Does the reader's understanding of these issues make any difference in your decisions?

19. Could you amplify on that?

20. Writers use quotation marks to indicate that they are offering a sample of reality that is largely unchanged. Do you think photography might benefit from a similar indication to the reader claiming that the photo is largely unchanged, a visual equivalent of the quotation mark, say a small icon in the upper right-hand corner?

21. If you had to choose, which would be better, an icon promising no significant alteration or an icon indicating alteration?

22. Is there anyone in the business anywhere that you consider a leader when it comes to thinking about these issues, someone we should talk to? Do you have contact information for him/her?

23. I am required to tell you that the name of this study is "The Epistemology of Pixels and Quotations" and that you may at any time contact the Institutional Review Board at 573/882-9585. Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions about this study?

The following page is a mockup of a page of a magazine using photation marks to indicate the photo has not been digitally enhanced. This page was put on a website so the magazine editors in our study could view it and give their opinions on photation marks. Thanks to Alexis Abrams for allowing us to use her photograph of a man waiting for a subway train in New York City.

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[1] Certainly there are scandals when journalists are caught plagiarizing or fabricating quotations and other details. But these transgressions are usually revealed by journalists or other interested parties. They are not the result of empirical academic research.

[2] George Wallace, the former governor of Alabama, famously complained that he was the only governor quoted in dialect by the *New York Times*.

[3] This incident is not itself a reconstruction. The first author of this paper was a member of the panel, "Teaching News Writers to Write Magazine Style," which was presented by the Magazine Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

PHOTO BY ALEXIS ABRAMS

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Riding the railways

A man's journey through the glory that is the city subway

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— JOE SMITH

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Media
Ethics

A BELLWETHER IN MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY:
THE WORK OF THE NEW YORK *WORLD*'S
BUREAU OF ACCURACY AND FAIR PLAY

Neil Nemeth
Department of Communication & Creative Arts
Purdue University Calumet
2200 169th St.
Hammond, IN 46323-2094
(219) 989-2631
e-mail: nemeth@nwi.calumet.purdue.edu

A BELLWETHER IN MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY: THE WORK OF THE NEW YORK *WORLD*'S BUREAU OF ACCURACY AND FAIR PLAY

The scene inside the New York *World*'s newsroom in 1884 impressed a young reporter who sought work to recount a vivid description in his memoirs:

> I looked about the great room, as I waited patiently and even delightedly, and saw pasted on the walls at intervals printed cards which read: *Accuracy, Accuracy, Accuracy!; Who? What? Where? When? How?; The facts—the color—the facts!* I knew what those signs referred to, especially the second. It epitomized the proper order for beginning a newspaper story. A fourth—and all these were pasted in triplicate or more—insisted upon: *Promptness, Courtesy, Geniality.* [1]

Joseph Pulitzer, whose drive and vision propelled the *World* into one of the nation's most influential and popular newspapers, admitted his newspapers made mistakes and emphasized the need to reduce errors because he considered the issue important. He made this clear in conversations with his personal secretary near the end of his life:

> It is not enough to refrain from publishing fake news, it is not enough to avoid the mistakes which arise from the ignorance, the carelessness, the stupidity of one or more of the many men who handle the news before it gets into print; you have got to do much more than that; you have got to make every one connected with the paper—your editors, your reporters, your correspondents, your rewrite men, your proofreaders—believe that accuracy is to a newspaper what virtue is to a woman. [2]

Though he died in 1911, Pulitzer's dedication to accuracy became more than mere discussion when his successor as publisher, his eldest son Ralph, established the *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play in 1913. The *World*'s desire to be accurate and fair implied the modern-day concept of media accountability. [3] The concept of being accountable to readers had existed from the early days of newspapers; the first attempt at a North American newspaper in

1690 had contained a pledge to correct errors. [4] Media criticism emerged as early as the mid-19th century. [5] Though the bureau's work ended when the *World* was sold and absorbed into the New York *Telegram* in 1931, professional journalists and academics would cite in later years the *World*'s bureau as a bellwether in media accountability, though little detail emerged about the bureau's activities. [6] This paper provides the first detailed analysis of the New York *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play, based on the archive of the bureau's correspondence at the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at the Columbia University library. [7]

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK *WORLD*

The New York *World* started as a religious daily newspaper that sold for one cent in 1860. It distinguished itself by refusing to publish police news, theatrical news or theatrical advertising. In short order, the struggling daily was merged with another newspaper, the *Courier and Enquirer*; the combined publication of the three papers was sold in 1862 and became an outlet for the city's Copperheads. [8] The newspaper's false report of President Abraham Lincoln's purported order of a day of fasting and prayer caused government officials to suppress its publication for three days in 1864. After the Civil War ended, the newspaper continued its support of the Democratic Party and won the designation as "the best written and least read paper" in New York. By 1876, the newspaper had been sold to a group of investors that included the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The newspaper assumed the name of The *World* under editor William Henry Hurlbert. The newspaper continued to struggle until it was sold again to Jay Gould, a Wall Street investor in 1879. [9] Gould apparently had little interest in the paper and its circulation languished at about 10,000 copies daily by April 1883. [10] The *World* was losing about $40,000 per year, though it had recently moved into a new building that Gould had built. [11]

The *World*'s predicament caught the attention of Joseph Pulitzer, the founder of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. Pulitzer, who had been born in Hungary in 1847 and emigrated to the

United States at age 17, had worked as a reporter in St. Louis and served in the state legislature. He purchased the *Post-Dispatch* at a public auction for $2,500 in December 1878. After a series of meetings, Pulitzer bought the *World* for $346,000 and assumed control on May 10, 1883. A week later Pulitzer published his vision for the paper; he favored taxing luxuries, inheritances, large incomes, monopolies and corporations. He added that the newspaper would advocate the institution of a tariff, reform of the civil service system and work to punish corrupt officers, vote buying and employers "who coerce their employees in elections. [12] During the next 30 years, the *World* aggressively investigated corruption in the railroad industry and Congress, while campaigning for civil service reform and the institution of a federal income tax. [13] Pulitzer's news agenda helped increase the *World*'s circulation from 15,770 copies on the Sunday before he assumed control in 1883 to 153,213 copies on Sunday two years later. [14]

One scholar assessed the reasons for the success of Pulitzer's newspaper: "The *World*'s strength lay in playing up material ignored by the other papers, or at best dismissed in a brief paragraph. It demanded a sure touch, for to puff up something trivial, and often not even local, could lead to a loss of both reputation and circulation (a newspaper must have one or the other) if the story failed to elicit interest." [15] The Sunday paper provided the key: "Sensationalism, illustration, sports, special features for women, all were prominently displayed, and the techniques for handling them refined, in the paper published on the one day of the week that men and women could read at their leisure." [16] The *World* treaded lightly on the subject of sex, reflecting the Victorian mentality of the times. [17]

The *World* appealed to readers with little formal education and scant literacy, so the newspaper's writing had to be simple. In addition, the *World*'s news values and presentation played to the large immigrant population that had arrived in New York during the last half of the 19th century: blacker headlines, larger type, more pictures, less demanding subjects. Though literacy rates increased though the final three decades of the century, scholars suggested that

Pulitzer followed a reasonable path, since the ability of many immigrants to read beyond the headlines remained suspect. [18]

The break-neck pace at which Pulitzer operated took a toll on his health. By 1887, the 40-year-old Pulitzer suffered from what seems to have been a nervous breakdown and deteriorating eyesight. [19] Upon his doctors' orders, Pulitzer gave up daily control of the *World* in 1890, though he continued to monitor the newspaper's operations for the remaining 21 years of his life. [20]

Available evidence suggests that the *World*'s newsroom was a competitive and perhaps a cutthroat place to work. Hours were long, staff members felt compelled to work even when sick and Pulitzer often heightened the competition in the newsroom by assigning reporters to cover the same story. Evidence seems mixed on how well the *World* paid its staff members, suggesting that reporters had some incentive to cut corners in their reporting and make ethical compromises to get the best story. [21] These factors existed in other news organizations of the time. [22]

The *World* had a good decade after Pulitzer died in 1911 and was succeeded by his oldest son, Ralph, as publisher. The newspaper declined slowly during the 1920s, though its news staff garnered seven Pulitzer Prizes after the awards were instituted in 1917. [23] By the end of the 1920s, the newspaper's financial picture darkened. Two major factors undermined the *World*'s chances of survival in a competitive New York City newspaper market: a price increase that depressed circulation and a slackening interest in the type of sensational journalism that the *World* had provided better than its competitors a generation before. [24] In any event, tabloids had moved by the 1920s into the sensationalist territory that the *World* had once dominated, and the New York *Daily News* had achieved a circulation of 1 million in the decade after its founding in 1919. [25] By contrast, the *Evening World*'s circulation of 276,267 in 1930 represented a twenty percent decline in the preceding decade. [26]

One senior staff member attributed the *World's* decline to its reduced emphasis on the social crusading that attracted a working-class readership in favor of an effort to gain acceptance in the more affluent portions of New York society. Publisher Ralph Pulitzer was depicted as "shy, high-minded and sensitive, rendering him unable to measure up to his father's relentless drive and instinct for knowing what interested New Yorkers."[27] Perhaps sensing his eldest son's inadequacies for newspaper work, Joseph Pulitzer had left his youngest son, Herbert, with controlling interest in the newspapers.[28] Upon doctors' orders, Ralph Pulitzer yielded control to Herbert in 1930. The *World* had lost money as early as 1926; it lost nearly $3 million in 1929 and 1930. Herbert responded to the financial reversals by slashing staff.[29] Weary of the publishing business, the Pulitzer brothers put the newspapers up for sale. Despite a last-minute effort by employees to buy the *World*,[30] the Pulitzer brothers received court permission to sell the newspapers to Scripps-Howard for $5 million.[31] The final edition of the *Morning World* appeared on February 27, 1931; the evening editions carried the publication's new name, the *World-Telegram*.[32] Postmortem assessments blamed Joseph Pulitzer's will and the brothers' love of the good life over managing the newspapers for the sale that ended the *World*'s 70-year run and the Pulitzers' 47-year presence in New York journalism.[33]

THE BUREAU OF ACCURACY AND FAIR PLAY

The stated ambition of the Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play was to "promote accuracy and fair play, to correct carelessness and to stamp out fakes and fakers."[34] Surviving documents leave little doubt that the *World*'s managers sought to improve its public relations and reduce its libel litigation at the same time. Fresh from a supportive Supreme Court decision in a criminal libel case in 1911,[35] the *World* and other newspapers of the time lived with the possibility of state prosecutions for criminal libel and civil libel suits decided on a standard of strict liability.[36] The professional legal guides of the day emphasized the patchwork nature of state decisions that made it difficult for most people to understand libel law.[37]

In addition to the bureau's efforts to increase accountability, the *World* published as many short letters as possible, including ones critical of the newspaper's policies if the writer refrained from aggressively challenging the newspaper. The *World* increased its openness to reader feedback by creating an opposite editorial page to include more lengthy discussions by readers. [38] Other newspapers used similar approaches, and some occasionally published letters to the editor that criticized the publication. Some readers used the letters to link the newspaper's reporting to their personal agendas, but others criticized the evolution of journalism from its overtly political orientation to a more objective perspective and raised questions about the nature of journalistic work. [39]

After the bureau began operating on July 7, 1913, the *World* made efforts to publicize the bureau's activities. The newspaper received an overwhelmingly positive response to the bureau's creation, including letters of support from *World* correspondents, newspapers across the United States, local businesses and charitable organizations, *Editor & Publisher* and politicians. [40]

Isaac Deforest White, a *World* reporter for 25 years and head of the newspaper's legal department, became the bureau's initial and only director. A Yale graduate, White served an apprenticeship at the Buffalo *Express* and worked at the New York *Times* for a year before joining the *World* in 1885. During the next 25 years, White worked as a crusading journalist who refused to accept official explanations for the news. In perhaps his highest profile investigation, White tracked down the person responsible for a Wall Street bombing in 1891 by tracing a button found at the crime scene to a Boston tailor. The type of button had been affixed to only a single pair of pants, which had been purchased by a Boston broker. White's story identified the broker, who later committed suicide. [41]

White's obituary in the New York *Times* in 1943 left no doubt about his significance in the city's journalism of that time: "As long as newspaper men gather to talk shop they will bring up his name and tell of his exploits when he was an outstanding reporter for the old *World*. They will tell of murders he solved when the police couldn't; they will tell how he almost started a revolution in Yucatan; they will tell of his exploits fighting pirates in Chesapeake Bay; and some will recall that he was the founder of The *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play and that, although he never studied law, he was one of the country's leading authorities on the law of libel." [42]

White's personality played a significant factor in the bureau's activities. *Editor & Publisher* suggested that the *World* "would miss long and sorely" White should he decide to leave the newspaper: "His friends are legion. Quiet and unassuming, but always knowing just where he is; methodical to a marked degree; unfailing in courtesy to everyone he meets; never going ahead until he is sure he is right; looking as young as he did several decades ago; a paragon of precision, but a prince of good fellows." [43]

The surviving bureau documents suggested the seriousness with which the *World* treated factual accuracy: "A card-index will be kept showing who are responsible for inaccuracies and unfair publications. This record will indicate in due time who are habitually inaccurate or unfair. Deliberate faking will be punished by dismissal. Carelessness or unfairness may be published by reprimand, suspension or dismissal. Misspelling of proper names and mistakes in addresses will constitute carelessness. Chronic carelessness will result in dismissal." [44] Staff members using the *World*'s news library found similar admonitions about accuracy in the biographical files; the newspaper's library procedures served as a model for the industry. [45] Personnel decisions resulting from the bureau's activities remained with the managing editor, since editors wanted to avoid giving the impression to staff members that they had surrendered their authority to manage the newsroom. [46] The bureau had the authority to prepare corrections and request that they be published, though editors treated the recommendations the same as a "printer's must." [47]

At the end of the first year, White issued a report that summarized the bureau's activities: 432 cases, 262 cases where the complaint was sustained, 164 corrections published and 41 stories where the *World* was not at fault. [48] The record led what is now *Editor & Publisher* to comment: "The *World* apparently is not only promoting accuracy and fair play in its own columns but is spreading the gospel of accuracy and fair play in journalism wherever newspapers are published."

[49] Within the first year of the bureau's existence, accuracy bureaus had been established at the Philadelphia *Ledger*, Minneapolis *Tribune* and the Sacramento *Bee*. [50]

LIBEL

White's dual role as head of the legal department and the bureau meant that the two operations were closely connected. A few of the lawsuits filed against the *World* survived in the bureau's files, as did summaries of judgments against the newspaper. It seems clear that the newspaper's orientation toward courteous treatment and liberal use of corrections reduced the likelihood of lawsuits being filed against the newspaper at a time when the threat of litigation increased. At the time it was sold in 1931, the *World* faced a minimum of 12 libel suits valued at $9.4 million. [51] By contrast, the four judgments against the newspaper from 1913-1914 were valued at $39,300. [52] The newspaper lost one verdict worth $825 and settled ten other claims for $4,075 in 1914. [53]

The outcomes of two libel cases illustrate how the *World*'s legal department and the bureau worked together to reduce liability. A 1914 case misidentified the alleged perpetrator of a crime in a catch line that ran atop a photograph on page one: "'Wolf of Wall Street' and His Lawyer, Who Was Also Indicted." The photograph was displayed adjacent to a story that described the grand jury indictment of a man charged with attempting to defraud the J.P. Morgan Co. [54] The man who lodged the complaint, a local attorney, had been depicted erroneously in the photograph and filed a libel lawsuit the following month. [55] The newspaper published a correction three months after the original photograph appeared. [56] White's internal memorandum tersely described the newspaper's legal challenge: "When the case comes up for trial the court will have to charge the jury that our publication was libelous on its face because it charged (the wrong man) with a crime. We shall be obliged to go into court and admit the charge was false. It will then be up to the jury to determine the amount of damages (he) is entitled to." [57] White cited the decision by editors to place the correction on page three instead of on page one as a negative factor in the likely outcome. An internal document blamed the error on the filing of the photo in the wrong folder in the newspaper's art department. [58] The original lawsuit for $100,000 was settled for $1,000 on April 24, 1916. [59]

A particularly illuminating example of the bureau's potential for averting libel actions occurred in a 1925 case of mistaken identity. The *Evening World* had reported erroneously that a Newark, N.J., contractor had been charged with grand larceny. Instead, the contractor had advanced bond money for his brother, who had been charged with the crime. The information had been telephoned to the newspaper's office by a reporter who had relied on the erroneous account of a reporter for a rival newspaper. [60] The problem had been compounded by the fact that the contractor's request for a correction had been taken by a copy boy who asked the man to call back later after failing to find a supervisor in the newsroom. [61] Instead, the contractor contacted his attorney after the same story appeared in the morning editions of the *World*. [62] The newspapers published corrections, but the attorney pressed for a settlement after receiving an apology letter from White. [63] Fortunately for the *World*, the contractor agreed to settle the dispute for $100. [64] Nevertheless, the situation produced a handwritten lecture from White on the proper handling of complaint telephone calls: "This case shows how (a) serious libel action was averted by prompt and courteous treatment and in spite of the stupid neglect of (the) office boy which permitted the repetition in the *Morning World* of (an) erroneous report in the *Evening World* after the aggrieved person had called up by telephone. Note that other newspapers were sued for libel." [65]

FAKE NEWS

One of the bureau's goals was to expose and prevent "fake news" from being published in the *World*. A published account of a dare in Beaver Falls, Pa., provided such an example. The short indicated that a local man drank 12 glasses of beer as a clock struck 12 and then swallowed his watch. A chain had suspended the watch, and witnesses claimed to have heard the watch splash in the man's stomach. [66] White sought an explanation from the wire service that provided the account; the reporter conceded the name of the person had been incorrect, but otherwise defended the report in vigorous terms: "We endeavor to give the *World* and every other paper a prompt and accurate service, but if we find that we are the object of suspicion at frequent intervals it might be better for us to minimize or discontinue our service until the hoodoo, if such it is, disappears." [67] The report came from the town's mayor, who had been a reliable correspondent and provided an affidavit about the incident. [68] One witness signed an affidavit, but the mayor conceded that the lack of similar affidavits from other witnesses undermined the story's believability. [69]

A more serious issue of "fake news" resulted in the dismissal of a news service reporter after the report of an explosion at a Pennsylvania ammunition plant turned out to be false. [70] The company denied report and indicated that "no accident of any character or description" had occurred. [71] White's investigation discovered that the dispatch had been sent by an employee who was later fired by the news service. [72]

White also kept abreast of "fake news" that got into competing newspapers. After spotting a story in the New York *Evening Telegram* about Santa Claus being wedged in the chimney of a Bloomfield, N.J., home, [73] White contacted the *World*'s correspondent in the area to determine how the story could have been published. The correspondent reported that the man described as wearing the Santa costume had actually died the preceding summer and that the police officer credited with rescuing the man said that no incident had occurred. [74] The correspondent concluded the letter with an assessment of the practice: "The encouragement of such a low standard of suburban journalism by the New York Editors (we hope unwittingly on their part) is discouraging to the rest of us." [75] Six months later, White requested that the correspondent keep him abreast of any similar incidents in the future. [76]

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND PUBLIC FIGURES

The files of the Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play provide ample evidence that the complaints by public officials and public figures were taken seriously. The instances cited show that most of the people in the public spotlight desired only a chance to correct factual mistakes and repair damage to their reputations. In the former instance, a local judge had been referred to as "the late Judge Joseph F. Mulqueen" in the final paragraph of a story about the appointment of another public official. [77] The newspaper published a correction, apparently without prompting from the judge, the following day. [78] In a letter expressing his appreciation, the judge said the error did not bother him, since he understood how easily mistakes could be made and expressed surprise that mistakes didn't occur more frequently. [79] In a similar incident, a state Supreme Court judge expressed satisfaction with the bureau's handling of a correction about a speech given to the state Bar Association of New York. The *World*'s coverage of the judge's speech had suggested the bar association controlled the selection of the state judiciary, and had been corrupted by money and power in exerting its influence. [80] The newspaper's correction brought a grateful response by the judge: "It gratified me immensely and demonstrated anew The *World*'s spirit of absolute fairness and justice. The trouble your people took to see that my views were accurately presented is deeply appreciated I assure you." [81]

A similar reaction occurred after the *World* published a correction admitting it had misquoted the New York City superintendent of schools. The superintendent had been quoted in a headline and story as asserting that the political forces of Tammany Hall had sought to control the appointment process for positions in the school district. [82] Responding to a telephone call from the superintendent's assistant, White found that the reporter had included "off the record" comments in the story and that the superintendent found the disclosure embarrassing. [83] The *World* published a correction and White wrote a letter of apology to the superintendent, who responded: "The retraction is perfectly satisfactory to me and I am sure that the reporter's error was due to over-zealousness on his part." [84]

A less friendly exchange between a local judge and the bureau averted legal action against the newspaper. The *World*'s headline implied that the politically connected judge had been removed from office when the judge had been temporarily removed from sitting as a special judge on a murder case of a suspected bootlegger. [85] The fact the judge's cousin had been charged in a separate bootlegging incident was mentioned in the original story and a separate story. [86] The judge made preparations to pursue a criminal libel lawsuit for "vindication" rather than "recovering money damages." [87] A warrant officer served the judge's complaint after which several conferences ensued. The newspaper published a lengthy clarification and the judge withdrew his lawsuit: "It gave me and my friends great pleasure to read this article, and I want to take this opportunity to assure you that the spirit of fair play and decency shown by you in this matter is deeply appreciated by them and me." [88]

Members of the clergy used the bureau clear up their concerns about The *World*'s reporting and lodge the complaints themselves. A New York City pastor objected to a headline that left the impression he had suggested women were responsible for the "fidgety condition of the man." [89] The pastor complained, "You insult the intelligence of your readers by publishing such trash. I did not say it, nor did I have any such thing in mind. It is a shame that a reputable paper like yours should thus impose upon its readers." [90] The newspaper published a correction, which satisfied the pastor. [91] Another pastor objected to the newspaper's account of his willingness to defy church leaders in a battle over the influence of modern values in church teachings: "I wish the bishop would invite me to one of his conferences," he said hotly. "I'd tell him something." [92] The pastor called the comment "an outrageous fabrication" and raised the following question in requesting a correction: "What are we to do in such a time as this, if the public press is to deal with us in this manner?" The *World* had already received a pointed complaint directed at the pastor about the reference: "I think if there had been a more liberal use of the birch in your hide when you were a boy you would have more *respect for authority* and be less in need of correction now in your manhood." [93] The published correction satisfied the pastor: "I congratulate you upon having such a department as that of the Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play. My recent experience leads me to believe that it is a most important matter if we are going to get the truth." [94]

THE BUREAU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Not surprisingly, the bureau's files contained complaints lodged by local and national businesses. Most of the surviving correspondence demonstrated that the business owners sought a fair hearing for their grievances rather than the pursuit of legal action. When a letter from the lawyer representing the Fleischman Company arrived, the bureau published a correction to an article that suggested the yeast manufacturer had expanded its operations into the bread business. [95] The attorney expressed the company's concern that rumors about the expansion of its businesses might prompt some customers to buy their yeast elsewhere. The attorney sought a retraction rather than the prospect of legal action, and the publication of the correction solved the problem. [96]

A problem with a headline prompted a New York City bus line to contact the bureau–through the *World*'s advertising department–for a correction. The headline suggested the bus company had owned a vehicle that had been involved in a fatal fire. [97] An internal memorandum from the company's advertising agency confirmed the discomfort with the headline: "It looks to me as though someone in authority at the *World* should have this gross negligence called to their attention." [98] The advertising agency's staff member suggested that the bureau might resolve the issue and a member of the newspaper's advertising staff notified the bureau: "Yesterday we ran a story of the Motor Bus Fire in Rhode Island and the Gray Line of New York, who advertise consistently with us, take exception to our head–and maybe they have some ground for their criticism. I am turning it over to you for investigation."[99] After making an investigation, White concluded that deadline pressures caused the mistake, which was corrected in later editions of the newspaper.[100] The published correction pleased the agency: "I very much appreciate the manner in which you have handled this matter and the fairness of the *World* in placing the matter in its proper light. We hold the *World* in high regard in this office."[101]

The bureau also aided business owners in getting their views expressed in letters to the editor. When the *World* published an editorial expressing doubt that people would choose to eat reindeer meat over turkey in holiday meals,[102] the owner of an Alaskan company responded with a lengthy explanation of his company's business. The business owner suggested that "[w]e are certain that the *World* would not intentionally injure a young and worthwhile industry; one on which an entire people–the Eskimos of Alaska–are dependent for a livelihood and an industry which was initiated by and continues to have the support of the Federal Government."[103] The *World* published a long letter to the editor that satisfied the business owner.[104]

THE BUREAU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH REPORTERS AND EDITORS

The depth of the bureau's correspondence offers insight into its relationship with reporters and editors, and provides initial indications that an ombudsman-type function carried the potential for creating staff dissention.[105] A troublesome complaint led White to observe that one particular published article "combined carelessness, inaccuracy and unfairness in an exceptional degree. The article would have been libelous and unfair even if true, which it was not."[106]

The problems stemmed from an article about the departure of a Paterson, N.J., pastor. The story suggested that the pastor had the subject of a circular letter that sought his ouster, citing his disagreeable nature that some parishioners had decided was not helpful to the church.[107] The story misspelled the pastor's name and that of his principal accuser.[108] The pastor wrote a complaint letter that threatened a libel suit if the newspaper did not correct its mistake.[109] White conducted an investigation that concluded the pastor had resigned to take a different pastorate in New York State and that he had received no circular letter seeking his resignation. The investigation revealed that the *World*'s account had contained erroneous information published by the New York *Herald* and that the principal accuser had repudiated the interview. The incorrect spelling of the names resulted from a re-write editor's decision to change the spelling of an unusual last name and a reporter's error.[110] The *World* published a correction that apparently ended the pastor's desire to sue: "Let me thank you for your interest and necessary corrections you have made. I appreciate it very much. Best wishes to you in the great work in which you are engaged."[111]

A letter from the acting district attorney from Queens County, New York, pointed out errors in the amount of bail set and in attribution for statements in a legal proceeding.[112] In a letter to White, the reporter admitted, "I thought I had said that he insisted on a large bail but after thinking the matter over very carefully I have come to a different conclusion."[113] The published correction appeared the next day.[114]

White had testier interactions with contributors whose reporting about the activities of John D. Rockefeller Jr. caused complaints. When a dispatch purported to contain material obtained from an interview with Rockefeller, White investigated the complaint lodged by Rockefeller spokesman Ivy Lee that the interview never took place.[115] Lee sought no correction, but claimed he wanted to alert the *World* to the problem.[116] The so-called interview turned out to be an account of a discussion by a third party in a casual conversation. The re-write editor denied responsibility and claimed editors believed the material came from a personal interview: "I deny responsibility for any errors that may have been in the above story. . . . it is true that Mr. Bennett (the correspondent) wrote it in the form of an interview—the same method used by our scores of correspondents every day. . . . I suggest, sir, that the blame rests entirely with Mr. Bennett for not notifying us that his story was a second-hand one, and not a direct interview. I believe, sir, that you will thoroughly agree with me after making an investigation." [117] After explaining how he obtained the information, the correspondent apologized: "Regret very much that we have caused Mr. Rockefellow (sic) Jr. any annoyance or that he could in any way criticize the treatment he received here from the press and correspondents." [118]

Later the same month, a story about man who had sued Rockefeller unsuccessfully for an alleged false arrest produced a correction and a stern lecture to a copy editor from White about the standards for libel. [119] White expressed concerned that the story had incorrectly stated that the man had been jailed for stealing $300,000: "This statement was an error on its face as Ludlow Street Jail is exclusively a place for persons arrested in civil (not criminal prosecutions). If Bright (the complainant) should see fit to bring an action for libel on this erroneous statement, our only complete defense would be to prove that he had in fact stolen $300,000." [120] The copy editor accepted responsibility and offered a contrite apology: "I admit that when I read the Ludlow Street Jail sentence I was without suspicion and that a copyreader should never be without suspicion." [121]

The bureau also monitored the content of wire services and sought explanations for their errors as well. In one such case, the *World* published a wire service account of the effect of a state prohibition of alcohol on the operations of government in Birmingham, Ala. The story claimed that the city trimmed its budget because of the income lost from the sale of liquor licenses. [122] The president of the city's board of commissioners complained that the article falsely portrayed the impact of prohibition and claimed the crime rate had declined after the decision. [123] White's investigation discovered that the National Liquor Dealers Association had sent copies of the *World*'s article to publicize its position. [124] The newspaper's follow-up story that exposed situation satisfied city officials: "I wish to express thanks to you and your good paper for the interest displayed in the matter, fairness, courtesy and diligence with which you have followed it up." [125] White criticized the wire service for the erroneous reporting: "Your misinformation has injured the City of Birmingham, has injured the cause of Prohibition and has injured this newspaper in its reputation for accuracy and fairness."[126] The wire association's reporter-owner hotly denied any association with the liquor association and defended the original report: "My reputation for truth and veracity as a correspondent is at stake and I intend to go to the limit in defending it!"[127]

THE BUREAU'S ROLE AS DEFENDER OF THE *WORLD*

Inevitably, the bureau's activities led it to assume the role of defending the newspaper. Perhaps because of the bureau's close relationship to the legal department, White accepted the role without regret and sometimes with humor. A *World* Magazine story produced a complaint from a prison inmate who took issue with the account of his case.[128] The story contained a confession that implicated two brothers, who pleaded guilty in the case.[129] The brothers feared length of their indeterminate sentences might be affected by the publicity surrounding the story.[130] White denied the brothers the opportunity for further coverage of their plight with a paternal lecture: "The newspapers did not send you to prison. You are in prison because you were implicated by the police in a crime and because you pleaded guilty. Your reputation has, as a matter of coarse (sic), been damaged, due primarily to the fact you have pleaded guilty to a crime. . . . This need not dishearten you if you are prepared to brace up and make good to the best of your ability when you are liberated."[131]

White faced the charge of bias lodged about the *World*'s reporting on the work of the William J. Burns International Detective Agency. The agency attempted to publicize the investigative success of the owner's wife and daughters in cracking a case,[132] but the *World*'s famed columnist, Heywood Broun, raised doubts.[133] The son of the agency's owner charged the newspaper with harboring a political agenda because of his father's association with the administration of President Warren G. Harding. White sought an explanation from the reporter, who defended the original story.[134] The newspaper reported the prosecutor's decision to drop charges against the alleged perpetrator and the Burns agency's role in the outcome. [135] On the same date, White wrote a letter to Burns that denied the charge of bias: "You ought to get over the idea that there is any ill feeling towards your Agency in this office." [136] The letter did not change Burns' mind: "To be perfectly frank with you we feel that the only possible reason for this (hostile) feeling is because of the radicalism of some of your staff and our well known and vigorous fight against radicalism." [137] In a letter that appears to have concluded the dialogue, White dismissed the notion of a political agenda against the agency: "It is part of a newspaper's duty—one of its chief functions--to comment on public affairs and the right to do so is recognized by the courts. It is deemed to be for the common good because it tends to promote the integrity of public officials." In an educational effort, White enclosed a copy of a *World* editorial about press freedom with the letter. [138]

The bureau also refused a request for a retraction from a business whose management was apparently embarrassed that a crime had been committed on the premises. [139] Managers of the Roseland Ballroom requested a retraction because "your implication besmirches our present reputation for maintaining an institution catering only to respectable citizens." [140] After investigating the coverage of the incident, White declined to recommend the retraction and offered an explanation: "Hotels, restaurants, theaters and amusement resorts are open to the public, and the public generally recognizes that it is often impossible, even by the strictest surveillance, to eliminate undesirable patrons." [141]

It fell to White to defend the *World* against transgressions that it did not commit. After the *World* published an editorial about the efforts by "manufacturers of arms and ammunition" to allow greater hunting of game birds, the manager of the DuPont Co.'s publicity bureau objected. [142] Though his company was not mentioned in the editorial, the publicity manager sent a statement to the *World*. White responded that the editorial, which had been in response to an article published in another New York newspaper, had not mentioned the company by name and the *World* had no reason to publish the company's statement. [143] The publicity manager seemed satisfied at having gotten the *World*'s attention, though he expressed skepticism about the newspaper's commitment to fair play. [144] The *World* published the publicity manager's letter and White sent a letter that contained the following: "If we had heretofore failed to convince you of our good judgment, the publication will at least be evidence to you of our good faith. Don't hesitate to kick whenever the spirit moves you, and try to get rid of the idea that we begrudge you a square deal." [145] The publicity manager responded with a letter that urged editorial writers to use common sense and hoped his suggestions would be taken as constructive criticism. [146]

White pointed out factual inaccuracy in the complaints lodged against the newspaper. When the *World* reported on Christmas activities but made no mention of the different date celebrated by members of the Russian Orthodox Church, [147] a reader chided the newspaper: "I am disappointed in the honesty of your newspaper. You, too, belong to the glorified American clique of untruthful newspapers." [148] After pointing out the fact that Russians of different faiths celebrated Christmas on different dates, White got to the point: "[Y]our letter to this Bureau is as unjust to him (the writer) as it is to The *World*." [149] The reader apologized. [150] Finally, White also helped improve the *World*'s image by disassociating its performance from other newspapers. When other newspapers made the mistake of using the wrong man's photograph in the story of the homicide of a Long Island, N.Y., couple, [151] White defended the *World* against a generalized allegation of an error and the threat of a lawsuit made by an attorney. [152] After investigating the allegation, White made it clear to the attorney that the *World* had no role in the misidentification of his client: "We did not publish this picture. Our files are at your disposal if you care to make further inquiry. Whenever you have satisfied yourself that you were in error, will you be good enough to write us a letter withdrawing your libel charge." [153] The lawyer withdrew his libel claim. [154]

THE BUREAU, THE *WORLD* AND PUBLIC ISSUES

Public interest in the issues of the day provided the bureau with many opportunities to resolve differences between readers and the accounts published in the newspaper. The *World*'s reporting on the patriotic fervor on the eve of American involvement in World War I did not satisfy George Creel, who would later become the head of the government's propaganda agency. He believed the *World*'s reporting of his speech at a New York high school had given the inaccurate impression that he was disloyal to the United States. [155] The story's headline indicated that Creel's remarks defending free speech created a "near-riot," which he contended was an overstatement. [156] White's investigation concluded that the headline was in error but the story was substantially correct. [157] In what appears to have been a compromise, the *World* published two additional paragraphs from the speech in an effort to clarify Creel's viewpoints. [158]

The bureau took a similar approach in dealing with a complaint from Mormon Church officials. The church officials objected to a column written about a Utah senator's criticism of the church's power and its alleged unwillingness to abandon the practice of polygamy. [159] The president of the church's Eastern Mission objected to the story's tone: "It seems hardly believable that in this liberal age such stories and unproved accusations should pass as current fact when the means of knowing the truth respecting the 'Mormons' are easily accessible. A grave injustice is done to the 'Mormon' people and I cannot but feel that The *World* has been imposed upon in being made, under the pretense of reform, the disseminator of falsehoods to the injury of an innocent people." [160] The newspaper granted a right of reply that included a compilation of reaction from eleven Western governors that denied the church had undue power in their states. In a preface, the *World* pointed out that the reply did not address "other crucial charges" made by the senator, which left the president of the Eastern States Mission less than satisfied. [161] The president wrote, "This is not pointing out my omissions definitely, but I am assuming you have reference to his accusations of recently contracted plural marriages. Really I thought that issue was so thoroughly dead that it needed no denial. Polygamy in each of these Western eleven states is a violation of the law, and yet each of the Governors declare that the 'Mormons' are law-abiding people." [162] Ever courteous, White expressed disappointment at the president's reaction, but pledged to give the church a fair hearing in future dealings. [163]

The bureau also served as a catalyst for public discussion of local newspaper coverage of a milk strike in New York City as requested by the director of the journalism program at New York University. [164] White coordinated the newspaper's response to a call for accountability for its reporting, including the preparation of a compilation of the *World*'s coverage of the strike and testimony from a photographer about the strikers' support for the newspaper's coverage. [165] The journalism director expressed his thanks for the *World*'s cooperation and praised the newspaper's coverage: "Confidentially, I don't mind telling you that the *World* is given first place by many people in the matter of fairness in reporting the milk strike. The phrase which I have heard over and over again even by the strikers is 'not hostile.' Such a phrase from a striker shows that he is trying to make a very careful distinction." [166]

THE BUREAU AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

Perhaps no other organization had a more consistent interaction with the bureau than the Christian Science Committee on Publication. The committee had praised the newspaper for creating the bureau: "I cannot express too strongly my appreciation of this movement on your part. It stands for all that is the best in the field occupied by newspapers. The assurance of fair play to all begets added confidence in and support of your paper." [167]

The committee closely monitored the *World*'s coverage for what it considered inaccurate portrayals of the teachings of Christian Science. When a story about alleged corporate fraud made reference to Christian Science as a cult, the committee sought to disassociate itself from the image. [168] After an investigation, White concluded that no correction was needed.[169] The committee was not pleased: "[W]e feel, nevertheless, that your tendency may be to subordinate the original idea of the Bureau to a desire to make as few corrections as possible, no matter how desirable those corrections are to those who have been misrepresented." [170] A correction then appeared, and the committee expressed its thanks. [171]

The committee objected to a *World* theater review of George M. Cohan's play, "The Miracle Man," that it believed misrepresented the teachings of the Christian Science faith. [172] The committee sought a clarification, but White denied the request initially after conducting an investigation. [173] Later, the correction appeared, however, and the committee expressed its thanks with a request to refrain from such references in the future. [174] White requested that the theater critic refrain from future references. [175]

The committee objected to a report about efforts to eliminate the effects of "Christian Science control" during proceedings in a divorce case. [176] The committee pointed out that the person in question was no longer connected with the Christian Science movement. White urged reporters not to repeat the error and that the biographical records in the newspaper's library be changed to reflect the information. [177]

THE BUREAU, EDITORIALS AND ADVERTISING

Unlike most contemporary news ombudsmen, the *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play accepted complaints about the content of the newspaper's editorials and advertising. The editor of the Sacramento *Bee* raised an especially interesting complaint. Editor C.K. McClatchy wrote a letter objecting to a *World* editorial that suggested California's progressive Republican governor had distanced himself from the party's more conservative presidential nominee in 1916. [178] McClatchy, who praised the *World* for creating the bureau, suggested that the *World* had misrepresented the political landscape in California: "Everybody in California knows (Gov.) Hiram Johnson did what he could for Charles Evans Hughes. But Charles Evans Hughes was defeated in California by the vote of the loyal Californians who knew that Charles Evans Hughes was being used in this State for the purpose of defeating Hiram W. Johnson." [179] Upon White's recommendation, the *World* published McClatchy's letter. [180]

Occasionally, the bureau responded to complaints about the content of the newspaper's advertising. One complaint from the Church of Christ, Scientist, alleged that an advertisement submitted by "The Christian Science Parent Church" had defamed the original church. The advertisement suggested that members of the original church had sacrificed their health and longevity by deviating from the teachings of founder Mary Baker Eddy after she died in 1910. [181] The committee submitted a letter and asked to publish its own advertisement to rebut the charges. The *World* declined to publish the rebuttal advertisement, and White instead engaged the committee's head in a dialogue about the role of newspaper advertising. [182] In a letter, White pointed out that the material had been clearly labeled as advertising and that charges the advertisement was libelous were "greatly exaggerated." In addition, White applied some diplomacy to the bureau's relationship with the committee: "Personally I regret that our contacts since your recent appointment as the Committee on Publication have not been more harmonious. My relations with your predecessor dating back to 1913 when this Bureau was established have always been pleasant and cordial and while we have occasionally disagreed with respect to what should and should not be published, it has always been in a friendly and tolerant spirit. I shall endeavor to maintain this spirit in future relations." [183] The committee head responded in kind: "When I left you the other night after having talked with you about the New Jersey item, I stated that I left you as a friend. That still holds good. I think you will find that I am ready to go more than half way on all occasions." [184]

CONCLUSION

The New York *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy represents a watershed in the effort by media organizations to hold themselves accountable to the public. To be sure, the *World* had self-serving motivations for creating the bureau: the desire to prevent conflicts with readers from escalating into lawsuits, reduce the publication of "fake news" and enhance the newspaper's image of fairness. The evidence in this study suggests that the bureau succeeded in all of these areas. But the public benefited as well: the publication of corrections for errors (though they were not anchored in the same location), increased awareness among staff members about the importance of accuracy and an improved method for ensuring that the newspaper's library contained the most accurate information possible. The bureau provided a public service by improving the quality of the *World*.

The bureau's efforts served the *World*'s public relations goals by promoting its image of being accurate and fair. The bureau provided readers with a convenient place to lodge concerns about the *World*'s coverage a public issue, though White did not write a regular column to increase his visibility as many present-day ombudsmen do. Inevitably, the bureau found itself in the role of defending the *World*'s activities, which may have been more significant in the highly competitive New York newspaper environment of that time. The bureau's ability to receive feedback may have reduced the need for staff members to deal with organizations that aggressively promoted their points of view, especially given the bureau's extensive interaction with the Church of Christ, Scientist. While one can argue that the arrangement may have insulated *World* staff members from these concerns, it can also be argued that the bureau's activities provided a more professional means for dealing with especially challenging groups and aided them in getting their opinions and criticisms acknowledged.

The work of the bureau resembles that done by contemporary news ombudsmen in a number of respects. The bureau provided a convenient listening post for complainants, though a few of them considered filing a lawsuit against the newspaper as a means for airing their grievances. In addition, Isaac Deforest White's standing as a senior staff member who retired from the directorship--through the paper's demise though he was 66 at the time--reflects the most typical career path for contemporary news ombudsmen. The bureau's work differed that of the modern news ombudsman in two respects: the bureau handled complaints about editorials and advertisements, and "fake news," neither of which constitute major issues of concern for most contemporary ombudsmen. The bureau's work also demonstrates the delicate balance that an internal accountability mechanism faces between the self-serving public relations functions and public service–and how it's possible to serve both interests simultaneously. Significantly, the bureau's correspondence demonstrates the degree of discomfort that some staff members had with the prospect of being held accountable, which it shares with the work of contemporary ombudsmen.

In sum, the work of the Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play provides a convenient starting point for assessing the ability of news organizations to hold themselves accountable. While a few contemporary newspapers adopted some version of the bureau, it would be another 50 years before the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and *Times* would become the first North American newspaper to create a news ombudsman position in 1967. By the end of 2002, 38 news organizations in the United States and 70 worldwide had created ombudsmen, [185] making the New York *World*'s Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play a bellwether in media accountability.

ENDNOTES

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[5] Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 116-222; and Marion Tuttle Marzolf, *Civilizing Voices: American Press Criticism, 1880-1950* (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1991).
[6] Cassandra Tate, "What do ombudsmen do?" *Columbia Journalism Review* 23 (1): 37-40 (May/June 1984); James S. Ettema and Theodore L. Glasser, Public Accountability or Public Relations? Newspaper Ombudsmen Define Their Role," *Journalism Quarterly* 64: 3-12 (1987); and Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 39-40.
[7] This paper is based on the complaints that demonstrated the depth and breadth of the bureau's activities, so I used case files that represented a wide range of activities and provided some resolution of the issue that caused the inquiry.
[8] John L. Heaton, *The Story of a Page: Thirty Years of Public Service and Public Discussion in the Editorial Columns of The New York World* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1913, reprint by Arno Press, Inc., 1970), 1-3.
[9] Don C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer: His Life & Letters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1924, reprint AMS Press, 1970), 118-127.
[10] Heaton, *The Story*, 3.
[11] Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 127.
[12] Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 133-134, 140-141.
[13] Heaton, *The Story*, 58-65, 212-227, 285-300.
[14] George Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer and the New York World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 50.
[15] Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 54.
[16] Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 57.
[17] Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 74-83.
[18] Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 58, 46.
[19] Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 166.
[20] Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer*, 178-180.
[21] Ted Curtis Smythe, "The Reporter, 1880-1900: Working Conditions and Their Influence on the News," *Journalism History* 7 (1): 1-10 (spring 1980).
[22] William S. Solomon, "Newsroom Managers and Workers: The Specialization of Editing Work," *American Journalism* 10 (2): 24-37 (winter-spring 1993); and Gerald J. Baldasty, "The Economics of Working-Class Journalism: The E.W. Scripps Newspaper Chain 1878-1908," *Journalism History* 25 (1): 3-12 (spring 1999).
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[24] "New York Sunday Circulations Recover After November Price Increase," *Editor & Publisher* 63 (34): 5-6 (January 10, 1931); and "Lippmann Sees Passing of Popular Press," *Editor & Publisher* 63 (35): 10, 41 (January 17, 1931).

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[26] "Mergers Not yet Reflected in New York Circulation," *Editor & Publisher* 56 (46): 12 (April 12, 1924); and "Circulations, Rates and Personnel of U.S. Daily Newspapers," *Editor & Publisher International YearBook* 63 (37): 69 (January 31, 1931).

[27] John O'Hara Cosgrave, "How 'Dead Hand' Killed Pulitzer Dailies Told By Veteran Member of Staff," Editor & Publisher 63 (42): 7, 52, 54 (March 7, 1931).

[28] "Elder Pulitzer's Will Directed Heirs' Conduct For Two Generations," *Editor & Publisher* 63 (41): 12 (February 28, 1931).

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[30] "World Employes Pledged $600,000 Toward Purchase Price," *Editor & Publisher* 63 (41): 11 (February 28, 1931).

[31] "Decision Sanctioning Sale of 'World,'" *Editor & Publisher* 63 (42): 14, 50-51 (March 7, 1931).

[32] "Scripps-Howard Buys The 'World,'" *Editor & Publisher* 63 (41): 5-10 (February 28, 1931).

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[35] See *United States v. Press Publishing Co.,* 219 U.S. 1 (1911). For an account of the charges the *World* made against the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt in connection with the construction of the Panama Canal, see Heaton, *The Story,* 263-284.

[36] For an informative discussion of the evolution of American libel law, see Norman L. Rosenberg, *Protecting the Best Men: An Interpretative History of the Law of Libel* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 56-234.

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[38] John F. Roche, "Preferred handling Given Letters From Readers by N.Y. Editors," *Editor & Publisher* 61 (7): 32 (July 7, 1928).

[39] David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 246-277.

[40] See "First Report, World's Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play, July to December, inclusive, 1913, The World, 1913, 13-34. The World Papers, Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play/Initial Reaction folder, Box 55 (1913). See also A.C. Haeselbarth, "For 'Accuracy and Fair Play,'" *The Editor and Publisher and Journalist* 14 (4): 66 (July 12, 1913); and A.C. Haeselbarth, "World's Bureau of Accuracy," *The Editor and Publisher and Journalist* 13 (22): 436 (November 15, 1913). These stories indicate that White worked with two assistants, who scanned the *World* and other newspapers for errors and worked the night shift respectively.

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[185] For an up-to-date roster of current news ombudsmen and informative articles about their work, see the World Wide Web site maintained by the Organization of News Ombudsmen at www.newsombudsmen.org.

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Eight Arguments for the Importance of Philosophical Thinking in Journalism Ethics

Hendrik Overduin, Ph.D.
Professor and Head
Department of Mass Communication
McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana
hover@mail.mcneese.edu

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Eight Arguments for the Importance of Philosophical Thinking in Journalism Ethics

Ethics is a branch of philosophy. One of the difficulties in teaching journalism ethics is to motivate students to think philosophically when they discuss the ethical implications of their profession. All too often, as ethicists such as Christians have pointed out, mass communication students – like the professionals they aspire to become – base ethical decisions on a quick review of the facts and their professional values.[1] So how can students be persuaded to consider the philosophical context of their ethical deliberations? This paper presents a set of arguments that show how media ethics requires more than just reflection on specific media situations and professional values. Media ethics calls for philosophical reflection about journalism itself. Engaging students into this kind of philosophical reflection prepares them for the introduction of moral theories and makes their application to media situations more natural and logical.

Eight arguments for philosophical thinking in journalism will be presented. The first and the last are general arguments and address the importance of journalism and the nature of reflection. The middle six arguments all address specific philosophical problems in journalism.

This paper just presents the arguments that these problems exist, and that these problems are more than "academic" puzzles for "experts" to solve.[2] They are philosophical quandaries the thoughtful professional cannot ignore,[3] and which students cannot simply dismiss as irrelevant to the business of getting a degree and a job. But no attempt is made here to resolve these philosophical difficulties. This paper only aims to convince journalists and philosophers alike that these problems are real in a sense that goes beyond history or the articulation of a consistent working philosophy..

More than history or clear definitions

Journalism's "professional philosophy of life" is rooted in the intellectual basis of Western civilization, as the media historian Hebert Altschull has noted.[4] But philosophical thinking in journalism requires more than just knowing where the ideas came from. Philosophy demands a critical analysis of those ideas and the arguments for them.

Philosophy in journalism is also more than just developing and clarifying definitions of basic terms or functional analyses of goals and procedures. Definitions and functions are important, and they are philosophical matters, as Chase rightly noted.[5] Bovée's admirable Socratic quest for an "integrated philosophy of journalism,"[6] for example, certainly provides answers to Chase's questions about definitions and functions.[7] Bovée, however, does not probe conceptual limits.[8] Hence, his discussion of objectivity skips over the problem that troublesome notion raises.[9] Philosophy in journalism inevitably has to move beyond Socratic requests for definitions to more Kantian questions like, "How are news judgments possible?" or "What does the world have to be like for there to be truth in reporting?"

Philosophy in this broader sense follows Sellars in holding that philosophy is trying "to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of term."[10] By this measure, a philosophy of journalism covers everything that goes into journalistic news judgments -- events, news values, narratives, civic life, media, democracy, objectivity, fairness, balance, to name just a few – and to see how these things "hang together in the broadest possible sense." Philosophy in this sense, as Sellars emphasized, keeps an "eye on the whole."

Benign neglect

Most professional philosophers have regarded the problems of journalism with benign neglect. One exception to this rule is David Swenson, an American philosopher and authority on the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, who called for philosophical thinking about journalism more than 70 years ago. Swenson's argument is based on the general importance of journalism in society and this is, in fact, the first argument for thinking philosophically about journalism. After considering Kierkegaard's criticism of the press,[11] Swenson concluded that:

> ...it is a vital necessity for every modern thinker to have a theory of the newspaper and to have a theory of the newspaper which corresponds in its intellectual significance to the significance of his thought in other fields."[12]

Swenson addresses the idea that philosophers only demean themselves when considering such a "recognized triviality" as the daily press. His response is to note that,

> ...a triviality which occupies the major part of the unmortgaged time and attention of millions of men, and which is in fact almost their only mental pabulum, constitutes for this very reason, namely, because it is a triviality which thus engrosses them, a most important matter for the reflection of the ethical thinker. [13]

This general reason for philosophical reflection on journalism has not found much of a following among either philosophers or journalists.[14] Whatever the reason for this mutual disregard, the operating premise of this paper is that fundamental philosophical issues arise within the professional practice of news judgment. More specifically, the ethical practice of journalism presupposes and entails philosophical positions on questions of reality, knowledge, values and morality. Hence, the philosophical efforts required to examine these foundational presuppositions is inescapable for those who take the state of today's journalism and its ethics seriously.[15]

Six problems

In addition to Swenson's general justification for thinking philosophically about journalism, the practice of making news judgment for a living raises at least six problems that demand philosophical reflection or analysis.[16] All are given below in terms of "need to..." statements. These are the philosophical "needs" or imperatives that serious journalists and journalism students must address:

(a) The need to resolve the philosophical paradox of news judgment;
(b) The need to articulate and defend a professional model to reconcile the professional and commercial imperatives of journalism;[17]
(c) The need to justify and defend professional autonomy in journalistic news judgment;
(d) The need to reconcile scientific knowledge about journalism and the enduring professional values and beliefs of journalism;
(e) The need to have discursive reasons for news judgments prevail over marketing prerogatives; and, finally,
(f) The need to understand the implications of the contemporary intellectual if not spiritual struggle between Enlightenment libertarianism and communitarianism for the public exercise of news judgment.[18]

We will look at each of these six problem areas below, beginning with the paradox of news judgment.

Paradox of News judgment

The paradox of news judgment is the second reason for engaging in philosophical thinking in journalism. This paradox is that news judgments can be sound even though all factual assertions used to express them are false; and, conversely, that news judgments may be wildly off the mark, though all factual assertions used to relate them are true. An example is given in Table I on next page. These stories are about the same event, the Louisiana senate election of November 4, 2002.[19] The story on the right contains only true propositions, but makes an erroneous news judgment; the story on the left has all the facts wrong, but the news right.

Not Trivial

This is not a trivial paradox. The paradox of the tortoise and the hare demanded an examination of our concepts of time and space. There was never any doubt about the outcome of the race! The paradox of news judgment demands an examination of the role of truth in news judgment.[20] For now, the point to be made with this paradox is that if a news story can be totally false, yet still relate the news correctly, what does truth have to do with news judgment at all? Similarly, if a true "news story" about an election result can get the news wrong, why is truth given such a place of honor in journalism?

TABLE I: THE PARADOX OF NEWS JUDGMENT[21]

Sound news judgment; facts all wrong.	**Facts all true; news judgment unsound.**
Louisiana voters face a run-off election Dec. 9 Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu won 48 per cent of the vote in Louisiana thereby forcing a run-off election Dec. 9. She beat her major opponent, Suzanne Terrell, state elections commissioner, who ran as an Independent, by almost 250,000 votes. There were seven other politicians running for the senate vote, including four independents, three Republicans and one Democrat.	Republican voters defeat Democrat Mary Landrieu More than 50% of Louisiana voters cast their ballots for Republican candidates in yesterday's election, handing a major victory to Suzanne Terrell, the state elections commissioner, who challenged the incumbent, Sen. Mary Landrieu for the senate position. Sen. Landrieu received only 46% of the vote; while Terrell and her co-Republican candidates polled 51%. Independents and another Democratic contender received three per cent. There will be a run-off election later this year.

The paradox may help to explain, at least in part, why certain publications, filled with errors and inconsistencies, are still accepted and even loved by readers.[22] However, getting the news wrong or the wrong news may cause problems. There is little doubt that many professional journalists feel that an emphasis on the "wrong news" such as celebrity gossip is indeed a serious problem.[23]

Professional discontent

The third reason for thinking philosophically in journalism takes its cue from well-documented professional discontent within the ranks of senior and mid-career professional journalists. While this discontent has several causes, including salary, and workplace conditions, [24] the deeper source of this professional unhappiness lies in an intellectual or philosophical difficulty. That difficulty is the inescapable clash between the professional imperative of telling the truth about the news and the economic imperative of making this activity financially profitable.[25]

To resolve this conflict, journalists need a theory or model about their profession that will help them to reconcile these realities. Developing such a theory or model – or choosing among them -- is a philosophical activity. This is a philosophical activity for it requires critically assessing what they take to be the defining characteristics and values of the profession while also keeping their "eye on the whole" of the mass media.

The professional and academic literature suggests that there are at least four general models to depict the nature of journalism: a consumer model, a citizen model, a professional model, and a communitarian model (civic journalism).

Consumer model

The commodity or consumer model sees journalists primarily as creators and dispensers of information commodities to a market. The major weakness of this model is that it makes journalists subservient to the market. Many, if not most, professional journalists are uncomfortable with this idea. Underwood summarized this problem:

> Today's market-savy newspapers are planned and packaged to 'give readers what they want'; newspaper content is geared to the results of readership surveys, and newsroom organization has been reshaped by newspaper managers whose commitment to the marketing ethic is hardly distinguishable from their vision of what journalism is.[26]

Citizen model

The citizen model sees journalists primarily as providers of information to help keep citizens informed about their government. The leaders of the Committee of Concerned Journalists endorse this model:

> Journalism's first loyalty is to citizens.... Thus people who gather news are not like employees of other companies. They have a social obligation that can actually override their employers' immediate interests ....[27]

This citizen model is closely related to – and to some extent consistent with -- the professionalist model, which is described next.

Professionalist model

The professionalist model does not appear to have found much acceptance to date.[28] Unlike the other two models, which are functionalist in nature since they are based on an idea of what journalism's purpose is, the professionalist model is based on a relational idea of the nature of journalism. Edward Wasserman, a former executive business editor of the *Miami Herald*, first articulated this model. Wasserman rejects the consumer model because of its "disquieting consequences" for those who hold that the press should be independent. The press should be independent, he says, "not just from the rich and powerful, but from popular fashion and taste (which has, at times, included jingoism and bigotry, as well as mindless consumerism.)"[29]

Instead, so Wasserman argues, readers are

> ... buying into a relationship with a paper, which tells them things they ought to know. The basis of that relationship has to be how much the reader believes and trusts what the paper has to say – not just that the paper speaks truthfully, but that its selection of what to say derives from an honest and disinterested appraisal of what it is the reader needs to know....[30]

This relationship between newspaper and reader leads Wasserman to his professionalist model in terms of the reader as client of the journalist.

> Reader as client means the journalist strives to serve the reader's interests, not necessarily his wishes, by fulfilling the professional obligation the reader has conferred upon the journalist by the act of buying the paper. Any professional – lawyer, doctor, CPA – is duty bound to tell clients things they don't want to hear. The journalist too, under this model, has a rock-bottom professional duty: To use specialist skills of disinterested observation and analysis to identify important events and developments in public life and bring them to light before the reader....
>
> The professionalist model not only permits the journalist to exercise judgment in deciding what needs coverage; it makes exercising judgment a central obligation of the job, which is to report impartially on those things in the society that, in the reporter's fair and honest opinion, most warrant being illuminated.[31]

Civic journalism

Finally there is the communitarian model, exemplified by the civic journalism or public journalism movement. The civic journalism movement, which started in the early 1990s, advocates new ways of doing journalism and a new way of thinking about journalism. Chris Peck, editor of the Spokane, WA, *Spokeman-Review* and one of civic journalism's supporters, calls for "some revised philosophical foundations and assumptions."[32] Other advocates of civic journalism have made clear that their main philosophical target is the idea of "objectivity," which can be considered the philosophy of traditional journalism.[33]

For present purposes, the main point about these models is that choosing among them is a philosophical enterprise. Which model of professional practice should a journalist choose? Since the answer relates to that most fundamental philosophical question of "knowing thyself," this is not a trivial matter. Given the general state of professional unhappiness, it should be self-evident that this business of "knowing thyself" goes right to the heart of being a journalist, the trade or profession of making news judgments for others for a living.

Professional Autonomy

The fourth reason for thinking philosophically in journalism is the need for professional autonomy in making news judgments. The crux of the professional autonomy issue is freedom from management interference in news judgment: decisions about what news to cover, and how stories are to be written or produced for print or broadcast. It is not always easy to defend and insist on that kind of professional autonomy while on the payroll of a corporation seeking profits.[34] Perceived market imperatives will all too often clash with professional news judgments of journalists. Without the ability to articulate the primacy of those professional judgments of newsworthiness, a journalist's autonomy is all too often trumped by marketing priorities.

Journalists need a clearly articulated philosophy of their craft to make the case that making news judgments *cannot and ought not* to be constrained by market considerations. Appeals to their intuitions about what readers want – an appeal that only underscores the importance of hiring pollsters to make sure – or reliance on the First Amendment and alleged "traditions" of American journalism are insufficient. Not only are there historical "traditions" on all sides, an appeal to the authority of tradition is, at best, a rhetorical device, not sound reasoning.

So, again, the need for clear philosophical thinking in journalism is evident. While philosophical thinking *about* journalism may help here as well, this cannot be enough. For example, democratic theory can certainly be used to underscore the need for professional autonomy in journalism. But that external theory about journalism cannot establish the necessity of such independence. Professional autonomy is too important to be left to bootstrap arguments from political theories about democracy or economic theories about the virtues of the free market.[35]

Scientific knowledge

The fifth reason for engaging in philosophical thinking about journalism is the necessity to deal with the results of communication science, and the resulting “scientific image” of the journalism profession. For the most part it appears that journalists not only ignore philosophy, they also tend to remain oblivious to the scientific study of their craft.[36] Since the end of the Second World War, the growth of journalism education in American universities also produced a body of scientific research into journalism. These scientific findings about journalistic practices do not offer much comfort for journalism or support for journalism ethics. The “scientific image” construes professional news judgment as a “routine” or “ritual.” Science sees journalists as knowledge workers who process information in a way that ultimately serves the interests of the corporate and political status quo.[37] Hence, journalists will look in vain to the “scientific image” to find “overriding” journalistic values in news judgment to sustain their ethical or professional intuitions.

At this point, the details of this scientific knowledge are not important. What is important, for philosophical reasons, is that journalists who wish to integrate these scientific “findings” into that “stereoscopic vision” of their profession Sellars talked about need to engage in philosophy.[38] They cannot just simply stick their heads in the sand of their ignorance and claim bliss, nor can they arbitrarily select what seems agreeable and dogmatically reject the rest. The thoughtful practitioner will carefully consider what science has allegedly uncovered, and then probe the methodological presuppositions and critically assess the merits or demerits of both method and substance of the scientific study. The one thing a reasonable journalist cannot do is to proceed as if this science does not exist. Making the scientific enterprise an object of such reflection is a philosophical undertaking.

Rationality

The sixth reason why philosophical reflection on journalism is necessary derives from the necessity for professional journalists to be able to make discursive reason prevail in a media industry driven by marketplace rationality.[39] This goes further and deeper than the professional discontent and need for professional autonomy and self-understanding. Making discursive reason prevail requires that journalists be able to argue for the primacy of their news judgments on the basis of logic, evidence and truth, the elements that drive discursive reason. They need to be able to show that their professionally based reasons are *better*, or more *appropriate*, than marketplace rationality, the means-end reasoning for economic goals, no matter how desirable those goals may otherwise be.

Marketplace rationality is pragmatic in a straightforward sense: it aims for optimal and measurable results, like increased circulation, or higher advertising sales, or better ratings, or improved profit margins. The pragmatics of discursive reasoning is more complex: it aims to achieve an action orientation among rational agents by informing them about the news of the day.[40] The success of marketplace rationality can be readily assessed; the achievements of discursive reasoning are much more difficult to determine.[41]

To illustrate this conflict within reason itself and its impact on journalism, consider the lamentations of Maxwell E. P. King, former editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. King begins by bemoaning the fact that civic journalism leaders have rejected "the neutrality and independence of the newsroom" as an essential component of journalistic professionalism.[42] Instead of taking "a legalistic position on our professional obligations"[43] King counsels that a

> clear articulation of ethics and responsibilities may be our best defense against a market-driven corporate culture that tends to narrow our field to a matter of what sells best. If we wish to be defined by the requirements of our proper role in an egalitarian democracy, not just by the whims of the marketplace, we must raise our voices even louder….[44]

King is aware that the journalistic "responsibility" to cover ethnic communities or neighborhoods that do not satisfy desired advertiser demographics needs to be defended on grounds that marketing managers are not likely to find persuasive. King states the point as follows:

> As most of America's newspaper companies have become large, publicly traded corporations, their leaders have become acutely responsive to the markets and to market analysts. To some extent, this has been inevitable. For corporate officers to respond differently would have been to court failure. However, the best of these executives do not respond Only to market forces. [His emphasis.] They are also responsive to communities, to employees and to the obligations and responsibilities of the profession of journalism in a democratic society. If they are not, it may well be the fault of the folks in the newsroom. After all, who else other than reporters and editors should be pressing the case for professionalism….
>
> I believe it is the duty of the journalist to do these two things: One, to participate in a vigorous articulation of the ethics and values of our profession, and, two, to press the case for meeting these responsibilities on those who run the large media companies. Frankly, I think they will respond positively.[45]

Assuming King's remedy is on target – and many will be less optimistic than he on the alleged enlightened views of conglomerate media management -- how can a journalist engage in this "vigorous articulation of the ethics and values" without a sound idea of how the elements of journalism "hang together in the broadest possible sense?" Doing so requires self-critical, philosophical thinking.[46]

Attack on Enlightenment

The seventh reason for thinking philosophically about journalism comes from the intellectual attack on the so-called "Enlightenment Dream," a vision of the role of reason in science, knowledge and human affairs. Some scholars today think the Enlightenment Dream has become a nightmare. For our purposes here, it is important to see how the loss of the ideals associated with the Enlightenment Dream impacts thinking about journalism. These ideals – now presumably "bankrupt"[47] -- bear directly on how "news judgment" relates to concepts about the nature of the individual, the market, the community, truth and reason and

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how all these "hang together in the broadest possible sense." The market, citizen and professionalist models, for example, all rely on the Enlightenment idea of the individual as an autonomous, rational agent. Civic journalism, on the other hand, opts for a communitarian alternative to the Enlightenment individualism and libertarianism.

Christians and his co-authors are among the most thoughtful defenders of the communitarian vision. They argue that the "deepest root" of Enlightenment thinking is the idea of

> ... a pervasive individual autonomy. What prevailed was the cult of human personality in all its freedom. ... The freedom motif – persons understood as ends in themselves – was the deepest driving force, first released by the Renaissance and achieving maturity during the Enlightenment.[48]

This Enlightenment "centerpiece" of individual autonomy, they add, also "...characterizes the classical liberal theory of the press.... its centerpiece is the same autonomous self that controlled the Enlightenment mind."[49]

This view of the press led to an idea of "negative freedom," so Christians and his co-authors contend, a freedom **from** external and arbitrary restraint.

> Individual autonomy's most pointed expression in the press is unconditional freedom for individual practitioners. Sociologically speaking, a fierce independence, freedom from external controls, an insistence on rights, and cries of censorship at any hint of regulation are conventions carved into the culture of media professionals.... That Jeffersonian flame burns hotly yet today.[50]

The connection to the ethics of news judgment quickly follows. For, as Christians and co-authors rightly note, individual autonomy also becomes "the animating force in the culture of the news profession as well."[51] They describe an Enlightenment-guided evolutionary path of professional journalism ethics that ends up being caught between the claims of two loyalties: a loyalty to community (readers) and a loyalty to professionalism (professional standards).

The conflict is well illustrated by the famous declaration of the editor of the *Washington Post* that he does not vote in elections.[52] Attempts to make either of these loyalties dominant flounder on the insistence of individual autonomy as freedom from all external constraints, so Christians and his co-authors argue. For journalism ethics, this means that:

> Reporters' morality became equivalent to an objective – that is unbiased – reporting of facts. …To report as much uncensored information about as many events as quickly as possible, from a nonpartisan, 'facts-only' point of view, became the supreme goal.[53]

This emphasis on objective reporting, they say, leads to an individualistic ethics that emphasizes professional norms rather than communal goods.[54]

The Enlightenment Dream suffered another setback with the philosophical critique of the very idea of objectivity. This philosophical attack on the idea of objectivity, for example, is one that many journalists appear to have accepted as a "done deal."[55] But without Enlightenment individualism and objectivity, so Christians and co-authors rightly contend, an alternative philosophical justification for freedom of the press and journalistic moral responsibility is required.[56]

Either way, journalists are faced with the philosophical task of rethinking the basis of their ethics. On the traditional side, they can try to defend their ethics using objectivity and professional values; on the communitarian side, they can appeal to the idea of service to the public good. Whatever choice is made, the arguments will be philosophical for they address key ideas in how journalism "hangs together in the widest possible sense."

To summarize the argument to this point in terms of news judgment, the quintessential activity of journalists, it can be said that philosophical thinking is necessary because this activity is important in society and because of problems posed by:

- the paradox of news judgment;
- the disillusionment within the profession about the news judgment enterprise;

- autonomy in matters of news judgment;
- the primacy of discursive reason in matters of news judgment;
- the scientific critique of news judgment, and
- the ethics of news judgment.

Existential Argument

The eighth and final reason for thinking philosophically about journalism is called existential because, following Watzlawsick and his co-workers here,[57] philosophy addresses problems at the third level of abstraction in thinking of journalism. The first level of abstraction from concrete experience is the level of facts, for that is what journalists normally deal in. The second level of abstraction is the set of professional norms, values, and methods that are applied to facts to relate the news. This level could be called the "working philosophy" of journalism, or its "ideology." The third level of abstraction is the justification or rationalization of the working philosophy or ideology. Examples of all three could be a news story in a newspaper (level one), a journalism how-to textbook (level 2) and a journalism ethics text or article about journalistic objectivity or journalism's role in democracy (level 3).

It was suggested earlier that many of the professional problems of journalism are problems at this third level. It is at this level that the *meaning* of journalism is at issue; its raison d'être, it is the level where "things hang together in broadest possible sense." Watzlawsick and his co-workers observed that people can tolerate ambiguity at the second level of abstraction, their working philosophies, provided all is well at level three. Applying this insight to journalism, it seems plausible to suggest that a journalist can tolerate all kinds of ambiguity and even confusion at the level where professional routines prevail. But, so these researchers note,

> ... this endurance [of ambiguity and confusion] is only possible as long as his third-order premises about his existence, and the meaning of the world

> he lives in, remain inviolate. This must be what Nietzsche had in mind when he postulated that he who has a *why* of living will endure almost any *how*.... Man cannot survive psychologically in a universe for which his third-order premises fail to account, a universe which is for him senseless.[58]

Their conclusion is that whenever the third-level of meaning is thrown into doubt, existential meaning becomes an issue:

> The loss or absence of a meaning in life is perhaps the most common denominator of all forms of emotional distress; it is especially the much-commented-on 'modern' illness. Pain, disease, loss, failure, despair, disappointment, the fear of death, or merely boredom – all lead to the feeling that life is meaningless. It seems to us that in its most basic definition, existential despair is the painful discrepancy between what is and what should be, between one's perceptions and one's third-order premises.[59]

Philosophy addresses this "existential despair" by seeking a clear idea of what journalism "really is" in the scheme of things, and by identifying its values and operational principles in a way that does justice to "how things in the broadest possible sense hang together in the broadest possible sense." Without such a third-level, philosophical scheme of things, the stuff of the "working ethics" of journalism tends to falter. So, again, the need for philosophical thinking in journalism makes itself evident here.

All that this paper has tried to do is to demonstrate the need and potential utility for thinking philosophically about journalism. It has not directly addressed any of the problems raised. That task remains to be done. The name of that task is "philosophy of journalism." Without such a philosophy of journalism, journalism ethics is, at best, an appendage to professional practice. With a philosophy of journalism that graps "how things hang together in the broadest possible sense" journalism ethics can at last come into its own as the professional essence of an honorable craft.

NOTES

[1] Clifford G. Christians et al, *Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning*. Sixth Edition (New York: Longman, 2001), 10.

[2] Franklin Donnell in "What Can Philosophy Do for a Journalist?" in Elliot D. Cohen, ed., *Philosophical Issues in Journalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 269, suggests that journalists consult philosophy experts in the same way they would seek counsel from any other expert. But it is not that simple because philosophy is not about expertise, but in questioning it. Nor is it simply a matter of collaboration, as in Merrill and Odell, *Philosophy and Journalism*, (See Note 22 below.) although such collaboration between philosophy and journalism education in general is to be encouraged and commended.

[3] Consider the following statement: "We find that our judgment of what is valuable in journalism is based on our notion of the nature and purpose of journalism itself. What is it to know something in journalism? What sort of meaning is conveyed by journalistic stories? Thus, unavoidable problems of daily journalistic practice lead to fundamental questions of epistemology and ontology, but most professionals have learned to bypass such questions as irrelevant." This statement certainly rings true, except that it was made about mathematicians and mathematics, not journalism and journalists. [Substitution by author.] The moral is that philosophical reflection is implicit in **any** self-conscious and self-critical professional enterprise. (The quote is from Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh, *The Mathematical Experience*. (Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 23.

[4] J. Herbert Altschull, *The Ideas Behind American Journalism: From Milton to McLuhan* (New York: Longman, 1990), 2.

[5] Dennis J. Chase, "The aphilosophy of journalism," *Quill*, September 1971, 15, as cited in Altschull, *op.cit.*, 20-21: "The problems of journalism are, at base, philosophical problems. They involve questions of definition and function: What is news? What is truth? How can one know truth? What is the relationship between news and truth? These are the recurring and unstated issues behind most journalism disputes."

[6] Warren G. Bovée, *Discovering Journalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 12.

[7] Bovée notes at one point that his philosophy is a "voyage of discovery" to try to find answers to questions posed by Merrill and Odell's *Philosophy and Journalism*. See Note 16 below.

[8] This is how Bovée sees his "challenge": ",,,we must attempt to make clear the meaning or meanings of what many have said are some of the key terms in the field of journalism. Those meanings should not be eccentric or merely personal; they must reflect what actually exists in the world outside our minds. The words name realities that relate to one another. Thus we must try to show the nature and interconnectedness of those realities, a coherent pattern, a construct that, to the extent it is accurate, will help improve the theory, study, and practices of journalism." (13) While all this is commendable, it does not get us **into** the actual practice of journalism. Another shortcoming of the Bovée book is that as a purported "integrated philosophy of journalism" it leaves out ethics.

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[9] His discussion of objectivity, for example, is concerned with what the *word* "objectivity" means, and the contexts in which it can or cannot be properly used. At one point he concludes that it is at least possible to be objective in the sense of getting to "know and communicate knowledge about events, persons, and circumstances outside the persons who are gathering and conveying this knowledge, and at least sometimes it is possible to do this so that what journalists think they know does in fact really exist and what they say does in fact really correspond to what they know." (115) That seems to say that objectivity is about truth – by way of the correspondence theory -- but he does not explore that dimension at all. His final conclusion waffles on this issue: "In general, therefore, journalistic objective reporting can be both possible and desirable. But, by itself, it is not the paragon of all journalism." (131)

[10] Wlifrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," in *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 1.

[11] Kierkegaard's polemics against journalists is neatly summarized in one sentence from that Danish philosopher's journal entries: "The lowest depth to which people can sink before God is defined by the word 'Journalist'." As quoted in Robert Bretall, ed., *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1946), 431.

[12] Swenson, David. 1927. "A Danish Thinker's Estimate of Journalism," *Ethics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 191. Such philosophical thinking, he added, requires "that most intimate and thorough penetration of reality by thought, which the thinker finds humanly possible." (190) That kind of philosophical thinking, so Swenson rightly notes, presupposes "a powerful ethical passion." (204) Swenson notes how Kierkegaard's polemics against journalism and the press proceed from an "ethico-religious view of life." The latter, so Swenson tells us, is "democratic in the best and truest sense of that much-used word; for it...assumes the existence of an essentially human problem, in the attempted solution of which every individual human life becomes significant, not merely for an external observer, but for itself. It dignifies every human being by assigning to him, and to him alone, the realization of his own proper human task. It refuses to puff the individual out romantically into fantastic proportions, by pretending to endow him with the capacity to solve another's problem in his stead, or assuming to saddle him with the doubtful duty of saving another's soul; to say nothing of dooming him like an Atlas to bear the world on his shoulders, and requiring of him an advance solution of the problems of future generations." (204-5) It is this democratic, ethical passion for the dignity of every individual human life that Swenson finds lacking among his contemporary press philosophers, H. L. Mencken and Upton Sinclair, for example.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] "Journalists don't have the time to get philosophical," so Romano observes, "and no self-respecting managing editor would hire Bertrand Russell if he could steal a sportswriter instead." Carlin Romano. ."The Grisly Truth about Bare Facts," in *Reading the News*, Robert Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson, eds. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 33. Kaplar and Maines summarize the problem neatly: "Philosophy is a discipline that operates in the realm of the theoretical; journalism operates in the precinct houses and courthouses of the real world. Good philosophers have a capacity for abstract thinking; among journalists the ability to think and express thoughts in concrete terms is prized. Philosophical discussions tend to be open ended in scope and ongoing in duration.... Journalism, in contrast, seeks to present information with a sense of finality while meeting deadlines that are clearly finite in nature.... Philosophy is a contemplative activity while journalism is

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action oriented." Richard T. Kaplar and Patrick D. Maines. *The Government Factor: Undermining Journalistic Ethics in the Information Age* (Washington, D.C.: CATAO Institute, 1995), 9.

[15] There appears to be only one attempt to look at journalistic practice philosophically in a systematic way. That is a jointly-authored book by a philosopher and a journalism educator, John C. Merrill and Jack S. Odell. Merrill and Odell state in the preface of their 1983 work, *Philosophy and Journalism*: Their preface states: "So far as we know, this is the first book which has attempted to deal systematically with journalistic philosophy in its main dimensions, to try to provide a philosophical context for the consideration of journalistic matters. (ix) The authors add: "Philosophy should, in our view, be the foundation of modern journalism...." (ix) Unfortunately, the Merrill-Odell effort goes astray through its focus on *applications* of philosophical theories **for** journalism. Their work does not address philosophical problems **in** journalism. Odell's chapters on "Foundations," for example, do not explore and develop the philosophical problems that arise in the practice of journalism, such as questions about the nature of news judgment or objectivity. His approach is "philosophy is good for you." This approach is not surprising, given that he had earlier advocated just that, namely "… effective journalist should, however, be a good *applied* philosopher. That is, he should be competent in using skills grounded in logic, … conceptual analysis, and value theory." (S. Jack Odell, "Integrating Philosophy and Journalism," *Teaching Philosophy*, Vol 5. No. 2 (April, 1982), 120-21.)

[16] To put this in terms of the Sellarsian view of philosophy, all address elements of the "manifest" image, the way journalism is actually practiced in the world.

[17] Altschull refers to this quandary as a "mighty paradox." (Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, p. 360. The paradox satisfies Watzlawsick's "double bind" definition. A journalist is ethically damned if commercial values are dominant, and economically doomed if professional ones are made to prevail. See Paul Watzlawsick, Janet Hemlick Beavin and Don D. Jackson, *Prgamatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967.)

[18] What is at issue here is the deeper debate between Enlightenment individualism and communitarianism, an active intellectual movement that crosses traditional political distinctions and philosophical boundaries. In journalism, this contrast was clearly stated by John C. Merrill in his "Overview" to A. David Gordon, John M. Kittross and Carol Reuss, *Controversies in Media Ethics* (White Plains. N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1996), where he divides ethical concern into two main emphases: the social or communitarian and the personal or individual. He describes these distinctions as follows: "…the libertarian media person holds fast to individualistic ethical development and the communitarian mass communicator seeks to enhance the community and takes ethical nourishment from the group. The first would improve society by stressing self-improvement and individual decision-making; the second would improve society by sublimating personal concerns to community wishes and cooperatively making decisions that are designed to eliminate friction."(5-6) Again, the relevant point here is not the respective merits of these positions, but the fact that these are fundamental, philosophical disagreements about human nature and the social, ideas that have implications for **any** philosophy of journalism. In this case, the implications are ethical. Also relevant on this topic is Steven Kuntz, *Liberalism and Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[19] It should be evident that a similar "distortion" of facts can produce identical paradoxical results for almost any news story.

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[20] Meanwhile, it may be worthwhile to reflect that Zeno's paradox of the tortoise and the hare – which addressed problems in our conceptions of space and time – is still being discussed today.

[21] Facts taken and adapted from Associated Press account. Actual results were as follows: Mary Landrieu, Dem, 46%; Suzanne Terrell, GOP, 27%; John Cooksey, GOP, 14%; Tony Perkins, GOP, 10%; Raymond Brown, Dem, 2%; Patrick Landy, Ind, 1%; James Lemann, Ind, 0%; Gary Robbins, Ind (0%), and Ernest Skillman Jr., GOP, (0%). (Source: *http://www.nytimes.com/ref/elections2002/2002LA.html.*) The run-off was set for Dec. 7, 2002.

[22] For an account of one such newspaper, see Adrienne Hurst, "Remembering Jim MacNeill, publisher, editor, iconoclast," in *grassroots editor*, Vo. 40, No. 3 (fall 1999), 9. [This article was originally published in *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, Summer 1999.] Reader acceptance of the "profusion of spelling and grammar mistakes" seems to clearly contradict the findings reported in Urban & Associates, Examining Our Credibility, Perspectives of the Public and the Press, American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999, 8: "Each misspelled word, bad apostrophe, garbled grammatical construction, weird cutline and mislabeled map erodes public confidence in a newspaper's ability to get anything right." (8) Quotation is cited from Michele McLellan, *The Newspaper Credibility Handbook: Practical Ways to Build Reader Trust*, ASNE Foundation, 2001, 54.

[23] See, for example, Pete Hamill's impassioned *News is a Verb: Journalism at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998).

[24] This discontent has been documented in many places. One of the most recent is an American Press Institute and Pew Center for Civic Journalism survey of editors at newspapers with a circulation of 50,000 of higher between Aug. 28 and Sept. 17, 2002. One of the findings reported by *Editor & Publisher* (Sept. 26, 2002) is that almost half the women editors said they expected to leave their current company or the news business. David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, in their *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People and Their Work*, Second Edition, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,1991), 213, draw attention to the "worrisome changes" in the journalism workforce, including "the exodus of experienced journalists from the field during middle age and beyond, the drop in perceived autonomy…, the drop in proportions of those who are very satisfied with their work, the increase in proportions of those journalists who say they plan to leave the field during the next five years…., and the drop in real media income."

[25] This difficulty is, of course, exacerbated by the media concentration referred to earlier, and the profit expectations in the market.

[26] Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom: How the Marketers and Managers Are Reshaping Today's Media.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), xviii.

[27] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 51-52.

[29] Edward Wasserman, "The Reader As Client," *American Journalism Review* (May 1997), 18-19 Wasserman says the consumer model "encourages a reflexive, supportive attitude toward cultural and political trends and prejudices...." He characterizes the consumer model as a "historical aberration" that must be "overthrown."(16)

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[30] *Ibid.*,16. Wasserman also argues that the consumer model was preceded by the "reader as citizen" model, which had them reading newspapers as "a daily ritual of participation in public life, an opportunity to become an informed member of the public – to be, in the fullest sense of the word, a citizen." There are elements of the professionalist model that appear consistent with aspects of the citizen model. Ultimately, however, the two models are in conflict, but this point is beyond the scope of the present paper.

[31] *Ibid.*, 17.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 16. But he does not ask journalism school to provide philosophical analyses. Instead, he wants journalism graduates who know "how to run focus groups, how to do basic civic mapping, and how to frame stories so that they connect the dots on the key issues so that fragmented elements of the public can see where others are coming from." (16)

[33] Schudson regards objectivity as the "chief occupational value of American journalism and the norm that historically and still today distinguishes US journalism from the dominant model of continental European journalism." (Michael Schudson, "The objectivity norm in American Journalism," *Journalism: Theory, practice and criticism*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (August 2001), 149.) Lichtenberg calls objectivity the "cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalists in the liberal democracies." (Judith Lichtenberg, *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, Vol. 3, 381.) For an instructive "debate" on both the issues and confusions in the notion of objectivity see John C. Merrill and Everette E. Dennis, *Media Debates: Great Issues for the Digital Age*, Third Edition. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 119-133. Objectivity itself is not the issue here, however.

[34] There in no little wisdom still in Lippmann's advice in the 1920s: "But as things stand today, if I had to advise any young man who wanted to go into newspapers, I would say to him: Go in, but before you go in, train your wants, organize your standard of living in such a way that you could quit without wrecking your life. A journalist who can do something else, if only drive a taxicab or make shoes, is a free man if he wants to be.... no man ought to go seriously into journalism who is absolutely and solely dependent on what he can earn by it." (Quoted in Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, New York: Vintage Books, 1981, 208.) A similar piece of advice was given by Columbia's Dean Edward W. Barrett who recommended that graduates maintain a "go to hell" fund. (Cited in Lambeth, *Committed Journalism*, Second Edition, p. 69.) And again, Kovach tells this story: "When I first came into the newspaper business, the first editor in whom I had great confidence told me the greatest lesson I ever learned. He said, 'Your value to this business is only going to last as long as you're prepared to walk out the door every day when you walk in.' That's true. It's true of any job that requires a personal commitment to the integrity of the work." Bill Kovach, "A Changing Press in a Changing World," *The George Chaplin Scholar-in-Residence Lecture Series*, June 22, 1995 (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 1995), 20.

[35] This kind of bootstrap argument appears to be the rule, unfortunately. It is widely used in the work of civic journalists, and also in the writings of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. It is not that there is anything wrong with such appeals. What is wrong is to expected democratic theory to do the work journalism philosophy should do.

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[36] Jim Willis, *Journalism: State of the Art.* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1990) is an admirable attempt to make journalists familiar with the state of research. Willis reviews research published during the 1980s and draws attention to the findings that impact journalism self-understanding, media law and ethics, readership, relations with sources, polling, advertising, media effects, and electronic publishing. The book concludes with a chapter that details original research into journalism executive attitudes towards research. The results, while not generalizable, provide an interesting snapshot of the philosophical malaise: intentional indifference to research. Willis found that there is indifference to research, but newspaper executives do not consider this to be problem. (196)

[37] For example, Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1978), which still seems to reign as a definitive study. A more elaborate work in the same vein is by a group of Canadian criminologists Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek and Janet B. L. Chan, *Visualizing Deviance: A Study of News Organization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) and *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.)

[38] Sellars holds that philosophy seeks to create a "stereoscopic image" that does justice to what is valid in both the "manifest image" and the "scientific image" of the world.

[39] For a comprehensive overview of these kinds of problems – and the absence of articulating the underlying deeper issues – see Cynthia Gorney, *The Business of News: A Challenge for Journalism's Next Generation, A Report of Carnegie Corporation of New York Forum on the Public Interest and the Business of News* (New York, Carnegie Corporation, 2002). She refers to and describes the "most commonly voiced laments" of the profession. These are "that satisfying shareholders has become more important than serving the community, that entertainment and scandal are gutting serious news, that foreign news bureaus and ambitious investigative reporting are now regarded as costly frivolities…." My use of the distinction between discursive and marketplace rationality is indebted to Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Thomas McCarthy, trsl. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

[40] This point is based on Habermas. The "action orientation" here should not be confused, however, with what Christians and others have called civic transformation. The latter may, or may not, result from the "action orientation." It is not identical to it.

[41] Civic journalism projects like to measure their "success" in terms of increased voter registrations, pledges of participation, attendance at meetings, financial donations, and other quantitative measures of "civic capital." Charity defines civic capital as "anything that improves the productivity of a community – that is, its ability to meet crises, solve problems, live contentedly." *Doing Public Journalism*, 11. This tendency to "measure results" in civic journalism lends credence to those who see civic journalism merely as an extension of the marketing department.

[42] Maxwell E. P. King, "Journalism in an Egalitarian Society," in *Ethics in Journalism*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Washington and Lee University: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Knight Professorship. Sept. 1998., 10.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11. He calls on journalists to "take some risks with their own security to engage this battle for **a new professionalism**." (11) [Emphasis added.]

[46] It cannot be emphasized enough that merely "applying" philosophical theories of normative ethics to journalistic situations does not cut it. The "applied" approach to journalism ethics produces, at best, a journalistic etiquette. A professional ethics is not and cannot be a mere philosophical appendage to professional practice. The ethics must flow from, or be grounded in, the essential elements of that practice. Why else should anyone take that ethics seriously?

[47] Clifford G. Christians, John P. Ferré, and P. Mark Fackler, *Good News: Social Ethics and the Press.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44.

[48] *Ibid.*, 21.

[49] *Ibid.*, 25."… the press's basic concept in England and America since the eighteenth century has been the idea of a rational, moral and autonomous self as having reality and meaning in relation to a transcendent order of reason and moral law; in this scheme, the self is limited in the exercise of its will only by right reason and individual conscience. The notion of the atomic self acted like a magnet, drawing together the main elements of classical liberal press theory: the doctrine of the self-righting process, the right of individual publishers to be free of government control, and the philosophy of natural law. Classical liberals saw the press as a social force that, like the autonomous self, somehow floated independently of the historical order and freed people from the tyranny of ignorance and superstition." (27)

[50] *Ibid.*, 30. This point raises a complex philosophical debate on the issue of positive versus negative freedom. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter this debate, except to assert the general point that the distinction does not appear to be tenable. Positive freedom, if it is to be meaningful at all, presupposes negative freedom, i.e. freedom from external coercion. See also Ian Carter, "Intellectual Crosscurrents: 'The Concept of Freedom'" *Humane Studies Review*, Fall 1996 (Vol.10, No. 3), also available on internet at *http://mason.gmu.edu/~ihs/hsrfall96.html#Freedom* (Nov. 30, 2002).

[51] Christians et al, *Good News*, 32.

[52] Peck, op. cit., 2-3, relates that story as follows: "I will never forget the program I moderated at the American Society of Newspaper Editors between New York University Professor Jay Rosen and Len Downie Jr. of *The Washington Post*. After Jay had given his academic and historic perspective on why, for the good of society, newspapers should be better connected to their communities and help rebuild public life, Downie cleared his throat and thundered something like, "I see no reason for public journalism. I have never voted in an election. I don't think journalists have any business being part of the communities they cover." The applause from the senior editors of America's top newspapers was loud and long. I'll be buying Jay dinner for the next 10 years trying to ease the pain of that moment."

[53] Christians et al, *Good News*, 36. They note that this development, combined with objectivity as the "applauded ideal" of empirical science, it is no wonder that objectivity became the "preponderant ideal" of journalism.

[54] Christians and his co-authors note how this individualistic ethics manifests itself: "Practitioners perceived themselves as bound together through the work methods they shared and the status to which they aspired. Ethics was not something attributed to the values of the public they supposedly served, but had become proper conduct within the journalism federation itself.... Thus ... an ethics of individual rights and personal decision making in terms of a day-by-day orientation began controlling the agenda. And journalism ethics is still characterized by the same individualistic assumptions." *Ibid*.,39:

[55] See, for example, Jack Fuller, *News Values: Ideas for an Information Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 14: "Almost nobody talks about objective reporting anymore. What philosophical analysis had not already undermined, radical multiculturalism did." The superficiality of this position is unfortunate. Serafini is closer to the truth of the matter when he observes that "had journalists been aware of the work already done on objectivity...they might have realized that the tempting...conclusion [objectivity is impossible] is still very much up in the air from a philosopher's perspective."(Serafini, *op. cit*., 259.)

[56] The authors of *Good News* point out that the "main philosophical role of a theory of expression is to answer its apparent irrationality." (43) That "irrationality" is that this theory allows harmful acts which would normally be either legally punished or morally blameworthy. And they rightly note that "confronting this issue requires an adequate delineation of the protected class [of actions] itself, and an account of the nature and grounds of the privilege entailed." (43) They conclude that these weaknesses of libertarian individualism "... preclude any further wholesale commitment to free expression grounded individual autonomy." Yet, they too recognize that "Autonomy as a ground has served a valiant historical purpose in guaranteeing that on matters of thought and discussion the peasant counts equally with the king.... However, the best in legal, historical, philosophical, and political scholarship turns us at this stage toward a theory that assumes positive freedom, toward an elliptical construction in which justified moral rules constrain the production of valued consequences.... Although individual rights and liberties ought surely to be respected, the philosophical task at this stage is to assign them their proper density...." (43-44) Again, how can a journalist engage or counter these arguments without engaging in philosophical reflection and argument?

[57] Watzlawick et al, *op. cit*. This work is a fascinating application of information theory to communication pathologies, especially schizophrenia. While the latter application is not relevant here, some of the more general principles of communication the authors develop are quite helpful. Their discussion of paradoxes is especially useful. Note, incidentally, that this sense of "existential" has little or nothing to do with what Merrill calls "existential journalism."(John C. Merrill, *Existential Journalism* (Iowa State University Press, 1977, 1995).

[58] Watzlawsick *et al, op. cit*., p. 264.

[59] *Ibid*., 266.

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Media
Ethics

An examination of diversity issues at Southeast Journalism Conference Newspapers

By

Kathleen Woodruff Wickham, Ed.D.
Journalism Department
The University of Mississippi
Oxford, Miss.

With the following graduate students
Amanda Elkin, Sarah S. Hollis, Scarlet Lawrence, Sandra Knispel, Jamee Smith and Marty Russell

Contact Information:
Kathleen W. Wickham
Assistant professor
The University of Mississippi
Farley Hall
University, Miss. 38677
Phone: 662-915-5501
Email: kwickham@olemiss.edu

Abstract

College newspapers are the incubators for young journalists as they develop writing styles, become part of the journalism culture, test ethical problems and determine the news they want to cover. To produce a fair and balanced representation of a diverse population a newsroom must include professionals with varying backgrounds and experience. This study examines a common breeding ground for professional journalists—the college newsroom. The focus is on written guidelines that call for a commitment to diversity and staffing by race and gender.

The results indicate that very few colleges and universities in the Southeast Journalism Conference, a loose confederation of journalism programs and schools in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee, have paid attention to the need for diversity in the newsroom through stated guidelines, ethics codes or staffing. Without written guidelines or commitment, student reports and editors have no standards against which staff members can evaluate their stories for evidence of bias, or a commitment to diversity. In order for student run college newspapers to grow and serve as true professional training grounds for professional newspapers, diversity in staff and stories is needed.

Diversity issues in college journalism curriculums reflect the concerns of professional newsrooms that colleges prepare the next generation of journalists for working in a multicultural world and a multicultural newsroom. This paper is an attempt to examine college newspapers and their staffs through the mirror of diversity statements and ethics codes. Campus newspapers were selected because a campus newspaper is frequently the first place journalism students have to practice their craft under the exposure of a large community.

The issue is also timely as college admission practices undergo national scrutiny and legal challenges to existing practices founded on the concept of encouraging campus diversity face U.S. Supreme Court scrutiny. The University of Michigan's system of awarding additional admission points to minority applicants is being challenged on the grounds that its numerical admissions formula creates quotas, which are banned by law (Kantrowith & Wingert, 2003).

In addition, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, which requires programs undergoing accreditation review to demonstrate a commitment to diversity, found nearly one-fourth of the schools reviewed between 1995 and 2000 out of compliance with its diversity standards (Bressers, 2002). A study by Manning-Miller & Dunlap (2002) noted even in light of these dismal figures few journalism departments "are developing multicultural courses or acquiring materials on multicultural issues (p. 45). Other researchers found few textbooks used in journalism classes mention diversity issues (Stark & Wyffels, 1990).

The topic, however, is not limited to academia. Professional news organizations are tackling the issue with calls to increase coverage of diverse communities, by sponsoring minority job fairs and through stated commitments to have newsrooms reflect the communities they cover. The Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) association has taken a national leadership approach through the development of the National Time-Out for Diversity and Accuracy program, which calls for a focus on how "race, gender, geography, class and age" are treated in the news (p.2). In the first year, 150 newspapers and 43 AP Bureaus participated in the program (Johnson, 2002).

Some newsrooms are dealing with the issues through the adoption of newsroom guidelines. These guidelines inform news organization employees on how to diversity coverage and often encourage the hiring of a diversified staff. The guidelines include statements such as "Be diverse in the voices you quote but avoid racial labeling unless necessary for the story," (Tampa Tribune, 2002).

The Poynter Institute has attempted to bridge the gap between the newsroom and academia by offering a week-long seminar, *Diversity Across the Curriculum*, to educators interested in expanding diversity beyond the discussion level to one of application (Poynter, 2001). Poynter's program follows the trend set by professional newsrooms in that institute faculty offer suggestions for adding a commitment to diversity to the existing journalist core values of fairness, balance and objectivity. Keith Woods, director of diversity programs at Poynter, explained: "A multitude of factors—as base as prejudice and as complex as societal structure—conspire to keep many people and their opinions out of the news. It's our job to make sure we include them (Lehrman, 2002, p. 31)."

This study is based on the Poynter premise and is designed to open the door to further exploration regarding the teaching of diversity as a core element in a journalism program. Specifically, the researchers wanted to ascertain how many college and university newspapers in the Southeast Journalism Conference have written guidelines for diversity coverage or written ethics codes that include a commitment to diversity. And the researchers also wanted to determine the racial and gender make-up of the targeted student newspapers for comparison with professional and national numbers.

Literature Review

Professional media organizations have not ignored diversity even though, as Lehrman (2002) noted, " the analyses of the news finds over and over that certain groups get left out. Journalists repeatedly make the error of portraying America as primarily white and middle class" (p. 30) when obviously that is not so.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) have embraced the issue. ASNE has called on the media to ensure that newsrooms across the country reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of the community they serve by 2025 when the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the percentage of minorities in the United States will have risen to 38 percent of the population (ASNEa, 2002).

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorism attacks, SPJ published additional guidelines for countering racial, ethnic and religious profiling. The guidelines ask the media to work harder to make a distinction between terrorists and mainstream Muslims or people who resemble stereotypical Arab-Americans. SPJ also urged journalists to cover victims of harassment and hate crimes as thoroughly as coverage given to victims of terrorist attacks.

ASNE offers newspaper editors a 10-point plan for recruiting minorities focusing on such items as making contacts and following up on relationships. The plan encourages editors to attend minority job fairs, the development of long-term strategies for diversity coverage and working with community organizations to hire the best talent from the area (ASNEa, 2002).

Along these same lines, in 1999 APME began to ask newsrooms around the country to participate in the *National Time-Out for Diversity and Accuracy*. The Time-Out is now an annual project that asks journalists to explore how accurately news coverage reflects the diversity of their communities (APME, 1999). Participants are encouraged to use the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education's fault lines of race, gender, geography, class and age as points of scrutiny (Maynard, 2002).

Diversity is one of the focus points for the Freedom Forum (2002), which recently launched two programs deducted to diversity. The Diversity Institute at Vanderbilt University is devoted to minority and diversity coverage. The Freedom Forum also introduced the Diversity Directory, which is a computer database designed to help newspapers diversity their staffs by providing profiles if colleges with significant minority populations that are often not visited by recruiters (Freedom Forum, 2002).

The topic of diversity is not new. As early as 1947, the issue of diversity in the news was being discussed. The Freedom of the Press Report, A Free and Responsible Press" called for: "the projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in society," (Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947). The Kerner Commission report, which was put together buy the administration of President Lyndon Johnson to examine the civil unrest of the mid-960s said news media failed to "report adequately on race relations and ghetto problems," (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 40). The report said this produced news that was "almost totally white, both in appearance and attitude" (Valenzuala, 1999, p. 41).

Newsrooms are not the only places lacking a firm grasp on the meaning of diversity. Levine found that in the university community, "few had any agreed upon definitions(s) of diversity or any explicit goals to help achieve diversity," (in Childers, Hon, Weigold & Chance, 1999, p. 51). The problem is that while journalism students tend to define diversity in terms of race (Valenzuela, 1999) others expand the definition to include gender, religion, ethnic background and disability (Dickson, 1995).

Yet when it comes to diversity staffing, college newspapers appear to be doing a lot better than commercial dailies (Hernandez, 1993), but college newspapers typically are held accountable by their communities in a way that professional newspapers are not.

While little has been written specifically about college newspaper guidelines for covering diverse groups or for increasing diversity representation in the newsroom, there have been several studies that explore race and gender staffing and content issues. Wickham et al (2002) argue that campus newspapers must reflect the racial and ethnic make-up of campus society in order to maintain credibility. Since the population of colleges and universities is becoming more ethnically racially, culturally and economically diverse, college newspapers not only protect their credibility by being diverse, but also serve as role models and public conscience for the student body (Morrow, 2000). College newspapers are often criticized for poor coverage of minority groups and few college newspaper editors are members of minority groups (Lederman & Shea, 1993).

Pease (2002) reported in the News & Race Models of Excellence project that news coverage is fairer and more substantive if there is strong agreement in the newsroom about the importance of racial diversity. The study also showed that there is a persuasive connection between quality journalism and dedication to diversity. Pease points out that greater attention to staff development and better communication of management objectives on diversity of staff are necessary to broaden diversity.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to begin to build a foundation for the study of diversity in the university setting. The specific research questions are:

RQ1: Do SEJ newspapers have written guidelines for diversity coverage (including, but not limited to race, ethnicity and gender)?

RQ2: Do college newspapers include a commitment to diversity in an ethics code?

RQ3: Is the racial diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to the percentage of minorities in the SEJ student population?

RQ4: Is the racial diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to the percentage of minorities employed by newspapers throughout the United States?

RQ5: Is the racial diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to the percentage of minorities in the United States as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau?

RQ6: Is the gender diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to gender differences in the SEJ student population?

RQ7: Is the gender diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to gender differences at newspapers throughout the United States?

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RQ8: Is the gender diversity of the undergraduate newsroom staffs in the Southeast Journalism Conference comparable to the gender differences in the United States as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau?

RQ9: How do the newsroom staffs at the historically black schools in the SEJC compare in terms of race and gender, diversity statements and newsroom ethics codes when the results for the survey are calculated to include two additional categories: only historically black schools and only traditional white schools.

RQ10: How do the newsroom staffs at the traditional white schools in the SEJC compare in terms of race and gender, diversity statements and newsroom ethics codes when the results for the survey are calculated to include two additional categories: only historically black schools and only traditional white schools.

Method

During the week of April 22 through April 26, 2002 researchers conducted a nine-question telephone survey of the 58 schools that participate in the Southeast Journalism Conference, a loose-consortium of journalism programs located in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. The SEJC includes colleges and universities with journalisms schools, journalism departments and those offering just a few journalism courses.

The conference was chosen because it is large and diverse enough, in terms of geography, class and ethnicity, to provide an overview of the issues. Of the schools that make up the conference, 20.6 percent are private and 79.3 percent were public, and of these numbers, 15.5 percent were historically black colleges or universities.

. Editors from 41 schools out of 58 in the conference participated for a return rate of 70.6 percent. The majority of the schools that returned surveys published weekly papers (27, or 65.8 percent), 10 (25 percent) published more than once a week and four (10 percent) published less than once a week.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to increase triangulation. Some of the student editors surveyed provided additional information and commentary, which added qualitative elements to the quantitative study.

Results

One of the issues that the researchers struggled with in selecting the population to be sampled was the existence of historically black schools in the SEJC. Because the study is focused on diversity issues at SEJC schools it seemed appropriate to include the schools. To eliminate the historically black schools appeared to devalue their participation in the SEJC and to slant the answers to reflect a white perspective. After all, the underlying premises of this study is that professional newsrooms look to all college newsrooms to prepare future journalists and issues of diversity are not and should not be debated from the perspective of a majority looking at a minority but rather people looking at people and viewing their issues and sources with equal validity. However, peer reviewers at the Southeast Colloquium questioned the inclusion of the historically black schools in this study and suggested pulling those numbers out. As such the results are reported here both ways. Additional suggestions from reviewers regarding this issue are appreciated.

All Southeast Journalism Conference Schools

The study found that only four schools, or 10.2 percent, that returned surveys had written guidelines at the student newspaper that covered diversity issues, leaving 35 schools, or 89.8

percent, of the schools without written diversity guidelines. The results answered the first research question, which asked if college newspapers had written guidelines (meaning race, ethnicity and gender) with a clear negative answer. See Table 1.

The second research question, which asked if college newspapers include a commitment to diversity in a media ethics code met with mixed results because of unclear and inconclusive answers. Among the 37 schools that responded to the question, 72.9 percent or 27 schools, reported having written ethics codes as seen in Table 2.

Additionally, 19 schools (51.3 percent) indicated ethics codes were used but provided neither a copy of the code as requested nor an expanded answer sought to determine the origin of a campus newsroom code. Of that number, seven schools (36.8 percent) indicated adherence to professional codes with the remainder newsroom codes.

The professional codes cited included codes provided by the Society of Professional Journalists, the College Media Association and the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The professional codes include commitments to diversity but the campus codes supplied were too few in number to result in an adequate pool for assessment.

Results for RQ3, RQ4 and RQ5 indicate minorities are poorly represented in the three populations selected for comparison. The results for RQ3 indicate student newspapers are overwhelmingly white with minority percentages falling below campus percentages. However, minorities have better representation on college newspaper staffs compared to their peers employed by professional newspapers and but their numbers are still below national figures.

More specifically, as seen in Table 3, white editors and reporters account for 83.2 percent of staffers compared to a campus-wide SEJC school white population of 65.1 percent. Minority editors and reporters constitute 16.6 percent compared to a SEJC minority population of 34.9

percent. The national minority percentage in professional newsrooms for African-Americans and Asians stands at 8.1 percent (ASNEb, 2002), while the census figure for minorities (African-Americans, Asians and others, but not including Hispanics) is 22.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

The results for RQ6, RQ7 and RQ8, as seen in Table 4, indicate females exceed males on the SEJC newspaper staffs by 9.2 percentage points. Women also exceed males in the campus population by 17.8 percentage points. However, the numbers are flipped using the ASNE figures for newsroom staffs with 63 percent of newsrooms staffers male and 37 percent female. Additionally, the student newspapers staffs and campus populations come closer as a whole to resemble national figures for gender with the U.S. Census Bureau reporting that males account for 45.7 percent of the population and females 54.5 percent.

Historically black schools

RQ9 sought information on the historically black schools in the SEJC. Six of the nine schools identified by the researchers as historically black schools (66.6 percent) returned surveys. One newsroom had a written diversity statement (16.6 percent) and five newsrooms had ethics codes (83 percent), placing the black newsrooms on par with the combined results (10.2 percent for diversity statements and 72.9 percent for ethics codes) and similar to the traditional white schools (9.0 percent had diversity statements and 81.4 had ethics codes) as seen in Table 1. The small sample of historically black schools, however, makes valid comparisons difficult.

As would be expected at historically black schools, African-Americans dominate campus newsrooms. However, the newsroom figures provide an interesting contrast as seen in Table 5 with whites making up almost one-quarter of the newspaper staffs yet constituting a campus population of 3.9 percent. The six schools also had a higher percentage of women on the newspapers staff (67.7 percent) compared to a campus population of 59 percent. However, the figures did reflect the same pattern seen in the statistics for all SEJC schools where women dominate in the newsroom, on campus, nationwide but not in professional newsrooms as seen in Table 6.

Traditional white schools

Of the 40 schools surveyed, 34 could be defined as traditional white schools. No attempt was made to trace issues relating to segregation nor are any assumptions made regarding the schools on issues of race and gender. The argument is made solely to compare the results of these schools with the historically black schools and the SEJC schools as a whole.

Of the 34 newsrooms that replied to the question, three (9.0 percent) had written diversity statements and 81.4 percent had ethics codes, compared to the overall SEJC figures of 10.2 percent with written diversity statements and 72.9 percent with ethics codes, answering part of RQ10 as seen in Table 1 and Table 2

The other part of the research question, which calls for comparing these schools along racial and gender lines with the historically black schools and the SEJC overall, found than the campus newspapers were dominated by white staffers (89.3 percent), 15.6 percentage points higher than the campus populations as a whole as seen in Table 7. In addition, minority newspapers staffers lagged significantly behind minority campus population totals 10.6 percent to 26.3 percent. The SEJC newspapers did exceed the professional newsroom figures but were far short of national figures for minority representation in the United States as seen in Table 8.

Discussion

The overwhelming lack of written guidelines for diversity coverage in college newspapers found in this study is vitally important in the field of research, professional media and student publications. A written commitment to diversity in reporting provides a standard for writers to follow. If a standard is implemented early in the education of a journalist, a commitment to diversity has an increased chance of becoming part of the journalist's mantra that already includes fairness, balance and accuracy.

While the absence of a stated commitment does not mean a newsroom lacks a commitment to diversity in staffing, story selection or source usage, the presence signals to the newsroom and the community that the issue is taken seriously, the newsroom is seeking to cover the community in all its dimensions and that voices not previously heard are welcome to be heard.

And while the number of schools with written guidelines is low this is not a direct indication of a lack of attention and commitment to accuracy coverage and a coverage that is representative of the campus community. A non-diverse newsroom does not necessarily mean coverage does not adequately reflect diversity concerns. It is, however, a cause for concern. The situation is problematic because in order for a newspaper to fully provide a representative picture of the community it represents the newsroom must have an inward and an outward, visible commitment to diversity.

These results indicate that very few colleges and universities in the SEJC have paid attention to the need for diversity in the newsroom through stated guidelines, ethics codes or staffing. An examination of news coverage might provide a different picture. But that was not the focus of this study. It does not mean the schools do not have a commitment to diversity in staffing, sourcing or coverage. It just means there is no written document explicitly stating that commitment. If student-run newsrooms do not express a commitment to diversity, their papers cannot demonstrate that they cover the whole realm and spectrum of campus issues, creating even more problems when issues of race and gender are discussed. And, without written guidelines or commitments, student reporters and editors have no standards against which staff members can evaluate their stories for evidence of bias, or commitment to diversity.

In order for student-run college newspapers to grow and serve as training grounds for professional newspapers, diversity in staff and stories is needed. Some student editors realize this and make efforts to enhance diversity coverage. Nancy Malone, editor of Louisiana State University's student newspaper, says she checks that photos represent the diversity of the community. Malone said she routinely sends photographs back to the scene if not enough black students are featured in the photographs. She also admitted that the newspaper "struggles with getting more diversity in the newsroom" (N. Malone, personal communication, Aril 18, 2002).

Since every newspaper in this study was found to employ men and woman as seen in Table 4, but some newspaper staffs comprised only one race, this study indicates that race is perhaps the bigger diversity concerns in college newsrooms. Not only do college newspaper staffs with primarily white staffs need to strive to hire more black students and other minorities but college newspapers staffed by a majority of black students should seek to include representatives of their campus minorities, which, since historically black schools were included in this study, might include whites, Asians or other racial minorities.

This study was limited in scope. But the findings suggest that journalism trends at the college level may not reflect what's happening in the professional world. The numbers are encouraging. But since college is an indicator of the students who might chose professional journalism careers, the importance of understanding diversity development at the college level is vital. Charlotte Hall, managing editor of Newsday, an active member of the ASNE Diversity Committee, explains:

> Diversity breeds diversity. We've found that recruitment and retention have improved as our diversity increases. People want to work where they see people like themselves—and where they find a rich mix of other backgrounds too. It's more fun, more exciting, more challenging (Morgan, p. 30).

More quantitative measures may be useful to determine the decision-making processing in hiring, including to what extent student journalists encourage students from other race categories to join their newspaper staffs. Along those same lines would be an examination of news coverage to ascertain to what extent, if any, a lack of diversity in college newsrooms staffs results in a lack of commitment to diversity coverage.

In addition, including Hispanics as a separate category from whites might paint a different perspective. The U.S. Census Bureau classifies Hispanic as an ethnic background, not as a racial designation. A follow-up study including ethnic categories might paint a different picture of campus diversity. Personal interviews with college newspaper editors could give insights into how editorials staffs are formulated and how much awareness the editors have of diversity issues in staffing and coverage.

Certainly more research is needed concerning diversity at college-level newspapers. This study hopes to raise interest in this aspect of journalism research to encourage a more comprehensive analysis of the issue. The topic is worth not only a second look, but also a regular annual or bi-annual study. College newspapers staffs are restaffed each year with new editors and new writers. And entire newspaper staffs can change drastically in as little as one semester. With this in mind, college newspaper diversity calls for more research. New findings may be compared to other data concerning the professional level of journalism diversity to gain a better understanding of just how well college newspaper trends reflect trends in the industry.

These findings indicate that students may be more aware of the need for diversity in their newspapers staffs than their professional peers. There are still goals to be achieved. Student editors should seek to employ or include a diverse makeup or staff. The lack of minority representation in college newsrooms can be a vicious cycle: white reporters do not cover minority issues because they lack the knowledge or the desire. Lack of minority concerns often intimidates or infuriates minorities and serves as another barrier to inclusion in newsroom staffing and coverage.

The research indicated that ethics codes were more common in the campus newsrooms than diversity guidelines. However, on examination it was discovered that the code frequently mentioned by the student editor was not a newsroom code, but rather a campus code. Campus codes, while sufficient for general campus conduct, did not go to the heart of journalism issues of fairness, balance, accuracy and in this case, diversity and gender. Woods (2003) adds that inclusion means more than coverage of groups traditionally left out of the news but using representatives of these groups as sources for stories.

The higher number of schools adhering to and utilizing ethics codes is a bit more encouraging because it illustrates and demonstrates a key element of responsible and successful news. While some may discredit the importance of written guidelines, they are an important part of the creative process. Journalist, by nature, conform to other deadlines, such as story length, deadlines and story formats. The implementation of written guidelines during the writing process has a direct effect on the finished product, which appears for the public to read.

The lack of diversity among staff members concerned Kelly Brown, editor of Samford University's weekly newspaper. She said in a follow-up e-mail: "We realize that we miss a huge part of campus life by not having more of a diverse staff, simply because we cannot be aware of everything that goes on all the time." At the same time, Brown lamented that minorities have not expressed interest in joining the paper (K. Brown, personal communication, April 23, 2002).

Not being able to write stories about everything that happens on campus means that the publication lacks authority and does not reach its full readership potential. Certain sections of students are underrepresented. Brian De La Torre, a student newspaper editor in Kansas, explained the importance in a Poynter Online story (Ha, 2000):

> A lot of times you get caught up in your own thing and forget to look at other people and their situations. Journalism has so much influence on people's agendas and what they think that it is very important for us to present a diverse perspective.

Although most student newspapers do not have written guidelines for diversity coverage, the study found a few general rules to which may editors were told to adhere. Racial identifiers, for example, are only supposed to be used as adjectives and only if they are important to the story.

Though the university is the main focus of this study, the professional community also plays a role in the examination of diversity coverage. Large circulations papers and media chains such as Knight-Ridder and Gannett have set the standard for other publications.

But student publications are not alone in their lack of written guidelines. Obtaining race and gender guidelines from professional newspapers is also difficult. Although Gannett champions diversity coverage, a company spokesperson said no written guidelines are submitted to editors. University of Mississippi Journalism Professor John Johnson, former executive editor of The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Miss., a Gannett newspaper, said "a lot of organizations, both media and other, are reluctant to put specific guidelines in writing because of the fear they will be used against them in lawsuits" (J. Johnson, personal communication, April 22, 2002).

Steele (2003) found arguments for and against written ethics codes when he interviewed attorneys on both side of the issue for the Poynter Institute. Some of the attorneys quoted argued that codes can become a blueprint for ascertaining a media organization's liability, while others say that while that argument has been made it doesn't work.

While there may be a lack of race and gender guidelines, research shows that many student newspapers boast codes of ethics. One reason for this phenomenon is the fact that university journalism departments have codes of ethics that are provided to student publications.

Diversity is a hotly debated issue in commercial newsrooms. And yet that debate has not reached the student media, at least, at the schools that participated in this study. A study looking at the existence of written guidelines for student publications in other parts of the country is essential to rule out geographical discrepancies.

Another reason for the absence of guidelines is the widespread belief that written documents do not change reality. Keith Woods of the Poynter Institute said he was skeptical about what a policy on diversity might say:

> Would a policy say that the paper would be more inclusive in its coverage? That the paper will try to hire more people of color? Many organizations say that in one way or another. But are they talking about affirmative action? Quotas? (Woods, 2002).

Woods faults organizations and universities for the absence of guidelines. The two biggest problems, he claims, are that first many organizations do not know what they want when they talk about diversity and second, that in the name of diversity organizations have resorted to tokenism or otherwise done harm in pursuit of good (K. Woods, personal communication, April 26, 2002).

As this study has shown, many questions remain unanswered. Additional studies are needed. The absence of guidelines speaks volumes about a commitment to racial and gender diversity. Rather than jump to a quick conclusion future studies are needed to investigate whether the absence of guidelines makes for biased reporting or whether a written statements can successfully help to suppress racial and sexual bias. Woods noted that any guidelines should not specify diversity as its core component.

> The over-reliance on the diversity with its myriad meanings, has caused a great deal of confusion, I'd push leaders toward a larger vocabulary—inclusion, covering the uncovered, mitigating bias and prejudice—that specific what's going wrong currently and how the actions being proposed will solve things (Woods, personal communication, April 26, 2002).

And amid claims that minorities have expressed little interest in working for campus papers comes a great need and commitment for recruitment and making minorities feel welcome through coverage of interest to them.

A comprehensive study of diversity guidelines in the professional press would complement this study because most student publications use the professional press as a role model. Without a firm professional base for student publications to rely on, these student-run papers are writing on unsteady ground. A nationwide study of all college newspapers focusing on how editors tackle diversity issues and codes of ethics would also enhance the body of knowledge related to the training of future journalists and their expectations after graduation. Such research would add to the slim body of research conducted on the topic.

Table 1

Campus newspapers with written diversity guidelines

	SEJC newspapers	Historical Black	Traditional White
	Percent (n	*Percent (n)*	*Percent (n*
Yes	10.2 (4)	16.6 (1)	0.9 (3)
No	89.8 (35)	83.4 (5)	99.1 (30)
Totals	100 (39)	100 (6)	100 (33)

Table 2

SEJC newspapers with a media ethics code

	SEJC	Historic Black	Traditional White
Ethics codes	*Percent (n)*	*Percent (n)*	*Percent (n)*
Yes	72.9 (27)	83 (5)	81.4 (28)
No	27.1 (10)	17 (1)	18.6 (9)
Totals	100 (37)	100 (6)	100 (37)

Table 3

SEJC Racial Profile

(in percents)

Race	SEJC newspapers	Campus populations	Professional	Census
White	83.2	65.1	87.93	75.1
Black	14.3	26.8	5.3	12.3
Asian	1.9	4.8	2.3	3.6
Other	0.4	3.3	0.5	6.5

Table 4

SEJC Gender Differences

(in percents)

Gender	SEJC newspapers	Campus	ASNE	Census
Men	40.4	41.4	63.0	45.75
Women	59.6	58.9	37.0	54.24

*

Table 5

Historical Black Colleges Racial Profile

(in percents)

	HBC Newsrooms	HBC campus	All SEJC newsrooms	SEJC campus	Professional	Census
Black	93.9	75.3	83.2	65.1	87.93	75.1
White	3.9	24.6	14.3	26.8	5.3	12.3
Asian	1.2	0	1.9	4.8	2.3	3.6
Other	1.0	0	0.4	3.3	0.5	6.5

Table 6

Historical Black Colleges Gender Profile

(in percents)

	HBC Newsrooms	HBC campus	All SEJC newsrooms	SEJC campus	Professional	Census
Male	32.3	41	40.4	41.1	63	45.7
Female	67.7	59	59.6	58.9	37	54.2

Table 7

Racial Profile Traditional White Colleges

(in percents)

	Traditional Newsrooms	Traditional campus	All SEJC newsrooms	SEJC campus	Professional	Census
Black	8.1	17.5	14.3	26.8	5.3	12.3
White	89.3	73.7	83.2	65.1	87.93	75.1
Asian	2.1	5.2	1.9	4.8	2.3	3.6
Other	0.4	3.6	0.4	3.3	0.5	6.5

Table 8

Traditional White Colleges Gender Profile

(in percents)

	Traditional Newsrooms	Traditional campus	All SEJC newsrooms	SEJC campus	Professional	Census
Male	58.4	41.1	40.4	41.1	63	45.7
Female	41.6	58.9	59.6	58.9	37	54.2

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Burnett Competition

Balancing news reporting with national security in an age of terrorism

by

David Cuillier
Edward R. Murrow School of Communication
Washington State University
P.O. Box 642510
Pullman, WA 99164
509/335-2374
davidc@wsu.edu
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David Cuillier is a graduate student in the Edward R. Murrow School of Communication at Washington State University and a former newspaper reporter and editor. Submitted to the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication 2003 national conference.

Balancing news reporting with national security in an age of terrorism

Abstract

In the shadow of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, this paper examines the ethics of reporting information in the media that helps citizens but also potentially aids terrorists. Using three cases and applying the works of ethics philosophers, the paper concludes that the media's duty to inform citizens outweighs the need to keep information out of terrorists' hands. Three guiding principles are offered to journalists and policy makers in balancing the competing interests.

Balancing news reporting with national security in an age of terrorism

At 8:45 a.m. on September 11, 2001, the first plane struck its target. Terrorists commandeered a commercial jet and piloted it into the north tower of the World Trade Center. During the next hour and a half three more planes would be hijacked and crashed, killing more than 3,000 people, redefining a generation and launching America's war on terrorism (CNN, 2001). It is a war without borders, where anyone could be suspect, whether they live in the Middle East or the Midwest. Over a year later, one casualty of that war, civil libertarians say, has been the public's access to information.

Reporters who cover the military, frustrated by the government's secrecy during the past year, formed Military Reporters and Editors and held their first national conference Nov. 15-16, 2002 (Military reporters, 2002). The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press issued a report outlining efforts by the government to stifle information in the name of national security. "In the days immediately following September 11, the United States government embarked on a path of secrecy unprecedented in recent years" (RCFP, 2002, p. 1).

Better to withhold information than risk it getting into the hands of terrorists and used for another attack, say some government officials. "The government argues the mosaic theory, that if there are enough bits and pieces out there that terrorists could fit together then they might be able to carry off another attack," said Scott Silliman, executive director of the Center on Law, Ethics and National Security (personal communication, December 4, 2002). "I have not seen any threats to national security, but the administration has an obligation to safeguard citizens."

So the conflict between press rights and the protection of national security continues, perhaps heightened, between journalists and government officials. The conflict also is being fought internally by journalists over the ethical dilemma: Should they publish information that could help Americans better defend themselves against terrorists while at the same time tipping off terrorists? Journalists are considering the ramifications of their decisions and their own responsibilities in what they report. "Before September 11 it never crossed my mind," said James Wilkerson, a reporter from *The Morning Call* in Pennsylvania who detailed on September 14, 2001, lapses in security at his community's local airport (personal communication, December 3, 2002). "But now I think about that when I decide what to use."

This competing interest between national security and the dissemination of information valuable to Americans is illustrated in this paper by three examples:

1. *The Los Angeles Times*' publishing on March 9, 2002, information from a leaked report detailing the nation's nuclear arms strategy;
2. a *CNN* reporter determining through data analysis the nation's cities most vulnerable to terrorism;
3. and a nonprofit government watchdog group publishing chemical disaster plans on the World Wide Web.

While some discussion of this issue in the media already has focused on the more public ethical dilemmas, such as whether networks should broadcast tapes of Osama bin Laden speaking to his followers, or whether the press should have access to troops on the front line, this paper focuses exclusively on government records gathered and analyzed by journalists or public interest groups. It is within this realm – accessing, analyzing, and disseminating public records such as the Pentagon Papers or Committee to Re-elect the President financial documents – that journalists can, on their own initiative, affect political discourse and public policy.

The conflict between the competing interests is discussed from a variety of ethical frameworks, including libertarian and social responsibility. This paper argues that the duty to report the truth transcends other interests. A vigorous and independent press, as advocated by libertarians, is necessary for a strong democracy. So is the need to provide society information that can be used to defend its cities and neighborhoods. As Justice Hugo Black stated in his opinion in the U.S. Supreme Court case over publication of the Pentagon Papers, "The guarding of military and diplomatic secrets at the expense of informed representative government provides no real security for our Republic." (NYT v. U.S., 1971, p. 719).

While reporting truth to create an informed citizenry is a prima facie duty of journalists, even libertarians would acknowledge that measures might need to be taken by individual reporters to minimize harm to the public. After all, exposing military secrets does not just affect soldiers on an overseas battlefield anymore. It also can lead to the death of thousands, perhaps millions, of civilians in America. One government report estimated a terrorist assault on a chemical plant could kill as many as 2.4 million people (Pianin, 2002). The battlefield is on U.S. soil, and that now increases the stakes of journalists' ethical decisions. The ethical considerations of minimizing harm are discussed in relation to protecting national security and reducing the odds of another terrorist attack. Finally, based on ethics theory, three guiding principles are offered to journalists, other information providers and policy makers as a way to preserve freedom while still minimizing harm.

Discussion of this issue is important not only for journalists, but for government officials and citizens, as the decisions being made today can set a new course for the nation's safety and for its fundamental character. "What troubles me most," said Silliman of the Center on Law, Ethics and National Security, "is that if we look back 10 years from now at the practices we are now setting, are we going to be proud? After World War II were we proud of what we did to Japanese-Americans? There is a lot one can do under the banner of war. We need to do it within the context of the First Amendment, and by what is right." (personal communication, December 4, 2002).

Government closure

Immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the government began closing access to information not only at the crash scenes but also in records libraries throughout the country. Actions included the secret imprisonment of more than 1,100 non-American citizens. Media pool coverage was rescinded by the government during military action in Afghanistan. Government workers were threatened with termination for releasing information. (RCFP, p. 38)

Government agencies closed records that had been public prior to September 11. Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a memorandum to government employees instructing them to deny access to public records if a claim of invasion of privacy or breach of national security could be alleged. This contradicted the Freedom of Information Act, which presumed disclosure. Furthermore, White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card Jr. in late March 2002 ordered federal agencies to withhold "sensitive but unclassified" information for national security reasons even if it would be made open under FOIA.

Records were removed from the Web sites of a variety of federal agencies, including the Department of Energy, Interior Department, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety NASA and the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (RCFP, p. 44). Newly restricted information includes locations of dams, pipelines, transportation maps, water quality data, FAA airport security breaches, and hazardous chemicals stored by companies and governments (LaFleur, 2002). States also have followed suit, closing records in the name of national security (Davis, 2002).

Such actions are not uncommon in times of crisis. Fear has been shown to be related to lower support for civil liberties by the public (Lambe, 2000, McCloskey & Brill, 1983, Ross, 2001, Stouffer, 1955). However, that does not necessarily mean the public is willing to give up civil liberties in the name of national security. A poll by the Freedom Forum in 2002 showed that 40 percent of Americans feel there is too little access to information about the government's war on terrorism, and 38 percent said access is just about right. Only 16 percent said too much information was being divulged (Freedom Forum, 2002).

The U.S. government's actions have begun to resemble Britain's reaction to terrorist bombings by the Irish Republican Army beginning in the 1970s. Following bombings in England, Britain's Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1974 was enacted to forbid media interviews with IRA members (Grant, 1992). Under the Offenses Against the State Act of 1990, subversive publications could be outlawed. Both acts grant powers of arrest and detention, making journalists criminally liable for publishing prohibited information. The OASA prevents a member of British security forces from talking to the press about security operations, similar to commands issued by U.S. officials to federal workers. Prior restraint is not out of the question, either, as the British government attempted to ban a documentary in 1988 about the security forces' killing of three IRA operatives.

While the American government has not started to arrest journalists or commit prior restraint, its policies are beginning to affect the ability of reporters to do their jobs. After the FAA closed its airport security enforcement database to the public soon after September 11, even those journalists who had acquired the information before it was closed were denied explanation by FAA officials about some of the information within the database, making it difficult to report accurately (Porter, 2002).

This is frustrating to journalists who see the benefits of information disclosure. Reporting about airport security lapses throughout the nation has led to increased action by the government to shore up problems (Porter, 2002). Pipeline maps have provided citizens the opportunity to protect themselves against future environmental damage or explosions, such as the 1999 gasoline pipeline explosion in Bellingham, Wash., that killed three boys (Harris, 1999). *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that the Department of Justice had dramatically overstated its record of convicting terrorists, based on analysis of Justice Department data and federal court data. The story resulted in a GAO investigation and the firing of corrupt officials (Fazlollah & Nicholas, 2002).

The caution, however, does not rest solely with the government. Newspapers and television stations might not aggressively pursue information because of resource constraints and societal pressures to conform. Wilkerson of *The Morning Call* in Pennsylvania has been denied information because of national security concerns, including environmental information about local industrial plants. For many reporters at small news organizations, a fight is sometimes not seen as worth the time and money. “We have a responsibility as journalists to get the information, but the day-to-day reality is I have 15 databases stacked up to look at. Newspapers also don’t want to put up the money as often anymore for a fight. I don’t want to spend all my time fighting.” (personal communication, December 3, 2002).

Journalism scholar John C. Merrill first discussed the decline in press freedom, autonomy and aggressiveness more than 25 years ago. The movement toward social responsibility, he warned, would gradually lead to American journalism becoming one “vast, gray, bland, monotonous, conformist spokesman for some collectivity of society.” (Merrill, 1974, p. 3). More recently, Merrill notes the gradual shift toward order, social stability and harmony in the United States, and against individualism and libertarianism (Merrill, 2000).

In the wake of September 11, journalists have been pressured even more by government, citizens and possibly their own feelings, to rally behind the military. Shortly after the attacks, many television newscasters wore flag pins. They might feel pressure to support American troops and not fight as aggressively for information as they would under more peaceful conditions. Whether from the government or journalists themselves, pressure mounts to suppress information.

Ethical duty to report the truth

Journalists have an ethical duty to report the truth, even if there is a risk the disseminated information could harm national security. Media ethics scholars have examined the conflict between the press' duty to report the truth and other duties. For example, the duty of the press to publish sex-offender notifications was ethically defended as serving truth as long as journalists take steps to minimize harm to the offenders (Johnson & Babcock, 1999). The press was deemed appropriate to report the shootout in 1993 between the Branch Davidian group and federal agents, but the media's interference and lack of minimizing harm was deemed unethical (Blanks Hindman, 1999). Several media ethics scholars have examined the ethical duties of the media when balancing truth with invasion of personal privacy (Cochran, 1996, Gauthier, 1999, Johnson, 1994, Reinboth Speckman, 1994, Winch, 1996).

From a legal perspective, journalists are entitled to publish government information without restraint, even if there is a chance it might cause harm to the nation. The U.S. Supreme Court determined in New York Times v. United States (1971) that the media have a legal right to publish government information, even classified military information, unless the government can meet the "heavy burden of showing justification for the enforcement of such a restraint." (p. 714) When the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* wanted to publish the Pentagon Papers about Vietnam policy despite the government's objection, the court ruled in the papers' favor. Justice Potter Stewart acknowledged the dilemma posed by the case between the public's "right to know" and the nation's need for security but ultimately agreed with the majority because of the overriding principles of openness in America. "When everything is classified, then nothing is classified, and the system becomes one to be disregarded by the cynical or the careless, and to be manipulated by those intent on self-protection and self-promotion." (p. 729).

However, just because the press has a legal right to publish the information, does not establish an ethical premise to do so. For example, reporters who bungled the ATF raid at Waco, Texas, in 1993 did not break the law, but they probably did not act entirely ethically, either (Blanks Hindman, 1999). In examining the ethics of publishing potentially harmful information, we can look at journalists' duty in American society and the works of Kant, Mill, Ross, and other philosophers.

The moral right to know provides the basis for journalists' freedom to gather and disseminate information (Cross, 1953). In particular, information regarding political discourse or important social issues is likely to be given more support than trivial details about celebrities. "The primary purpose of press rights to gather and publish information is to promote informed political and personal decision making through a mechanism of public discourse." (Gauthier, 1999, p. 198). Indeed, one can argue that the people's "right to know" is a duty of the press, so that "while the First Amendment gives the press the *right* to freely print the news, the people's right to know gives the press the *duty* to print it." (Fink, 1988, p. 11). This is the type of information that Americans want to know, have a right to know and, more important, have a need to know.

William D. Ross' prima facie duties of fidelity, justice, beneficence, and self-improvement apply to the publication of information that can aid public discourse. Ross believes multiple personal duties can be examined in wrestling with issues of competing values (Ross, 1930). The media have made a promise with the public to keep citizens aware of what is happening in their communities and government. Because of the duty of fidelity, they should keep the promise. Justice is served when wrongs are exposed by the media. Publishing the information makes lives better. The country has benefited, particularly through self-improvement, because when the media exposes problems then the public is more likely to support fixing them, even if it means paying to fix them.

There is also an occupational duty involved (White, 1984). In this case, it is a journalist's occupational duty to report the truth. The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, first adopted in 1926 and updated four times since, calls for journalists to seek the truth and report it: "Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection." (SPJ, 1996). The code also suggests journalists act independently: "Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable."

Ethical behavior, however, should not have to be learned from an employee handbook or a code posted on the wall. It comes from within. Eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative would suggest that telling the truth is supreme, no matter the consequences. It is the means, Kant says, and the morality of the means that matters. Actions are justified if done with the right motive, out of a sense of duty (Kant, 1785/1965). This deontological approach to ethics focuses on duty. Telling the truth is a fundamental moral right in American society. The act of reporting information and keeping government and public discourse open, in this country, is universal law.

Libertarians would maintain that the information needs to be reported, regardless of the outcome. This kind of information should be placed on the most prominent shelf in the marketplace of ideas.

John Milton argues in *Areopagitica* that people can reason for themselves and that government should not interfere. He believed that we can find truth if we have the information and that it is the media's role to enlighten the public and safeguard personal liberties (Milton, 1644/1971).

John Stuart Mill, another libertarian, would suggest a utilitarian philosophy, approaching it from a practical perspective by looking at the consequences. What decision would do the most good for the most people? If government infringes on First Amendment rights by restricting information that would be helpful for the public, then the rights of 280 million people are damaged. On the other hand, if that information aids terrorists, perhaps the lives of thousands or a few million could be lost. How does one balance certain erosion of civil liberties against possible deaths? That is a hard choice that government and journalists must make: Restrict information, therefore *guaranteeing* harm to *everyone*, or keep information open and *possibly* cause harm to a *fraction* of the population. A utilitarian approach would likely favor disclosure, guaranteeing knowledge and a free flow of information for the benefit to the many despite the possibility of harm to the few.

What makes determination even more challenging is the difficulty of predicting whether a decision will lead to loss of life. It is difficult for anyone – the press, public or government – to predict what information, if made public, would harm the nation. It is apparent, however, that terrorists' motivation, including learning how to pilot commercial airliners, would allow them to accomplish their goals without reliance on American newspapers and television. And if the government becomes secretive then that would prevent citizens from making informed decisions to protect themselves and their communities. The American pro-gun slogan can be adapted to this case: If information is outlawed then only outlaws will have information.

Those who promote social responsibility also can argue for disclosure. The Commission on Freedom of the Press (Hutchins Commission) in 1947 advocated that the media accept the responsibilities that come with their rights. They include providing a truthful, comprehensive account in a meaningful context, and providing full access to the day's intelligence (Blanchard, 1977). Also, the media should present and clarify goals and values of society, such as open government. Social responsibility dictates that the media continue to aggressively publish information that can help society defend itself.

Ethical duty to minimize harm

Extolling the values of press freedom is not going to go far at Ground Zero in New York City. Many Americans are afraid, and the threat for future attacks is very real (Pianin, 2002). Nobody wants to see another terrorist attack, and no journalist or public official wants to be responsible for divulging information that might aid in an attack. In deciding between two competing interests – in this case, national security in contrast to providing the public information – truth should prevail. Considerations, however, should be made by journalists to minimize harm.

In 1996, the Society of Professional Journalists amended its code of ethics to include a section about minimizing harm. The code suggests that journalists "recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance." (SPJ, 1996).

Even libertarian John Stuart Mill would suggest that harm to others should be taken into account in a decision. In his essay *On Liberty*, Mill uses such phrases as "for any purpose not involving harm to others" and "a definite damage, or a definite risk of damage, either to an individual or to the public." (Mill, 1859/1975). The key here is "definite." Vague government notions of possible damage, such as the terrorism mosaic theory, do not count.

Merrill, too, would acknowledge the need to consider whether the publication of information could harm lives. Yes, freedom, individualism and humanism are imperative, "but it does not suggest irresponsibility. Contrary to what many people seem to think, one can stress freedom without condoning irresponsibility." (Merrill, 1996, p. 5) Further, Merrill urges that the true existential journalist "considers consequences of journalistic action and takes responsibility for it, not 'passing the buck' or 'copping out' by offering excuses or saying that he is simply following orders of a superior." (p. 32)

In deciding whether to publish or keep information hidden that could aid terrorists, journalists consider omission of truth, or suppression of news. If vital information, such as vulnerabilities in airport security systems, would be likely to help terrorists kill civilians then the journalist would be ethically responsible for minimizing harm by being selective in what is reported. For example, perhaps a story explaining the overall problems in the security system and what is being done (or not done) to correct the problems could be published while leaving out the descriptions of specific materials or weapons that can move through the screening process undetected. Journalists can make these decisions through their skills of information gathering, consultation with experts and critical analysis, as well as their relatively neutral position in society.

Minimizing harm is ethically justified in order to protect the community from identifiable harm. Just as journalists reporting live from battle zones generally do not broadcast troop movements, so now do journalists reporting on the home front take care in reporting information that might cost lives. Journalists should consider other duties – to their fellow man – as well as to truth. These principles can be applied to real-life scenarios.

Three case studies

Following are three cases of journalists or other information providers obtaining and publishing what government officials have considered a risk to national security. In all three cases, individuals obtained substantive factual information that was deemed important to the American public but also potentially useful to terrorists. And in all three cases, the decision was made to publish most of the information with efforts taken to minimize potential harm.

Nuclear arms strategy

In spring 2002, someone secretly provided *The Los Angeles Times* part of a confidential government report titled "The Nuclear Posture Review." The information was a detailed account of U.S. nuclear arms planning, explaining how the Pentagon was preparing nuclear strategies against China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria. It also included inventories of the nation's nuclear arsenal with specific numbers and types of warheads.

Editors at the paper held the story for 10 days as they verified the information, sifted through the materials for newsworthy information, consulted experts, and assessed the ramifications of publication (Leaks spark debate, 2002). The editors described to government officials what they were contemplating publishing to get comments and to see if anything would compromise national security. The *Times* eventually decided the public's right to know outweighed possible damage to national security, so stories were published on March 9. The gist of the report was included in the stories, including the countries that were viewed as threats, but no details of the nation's nuclear arsenal were published.

"When a leak occurs, it can be handled in a way that protects the public interest and government's interest," said Doyle McManus, Washington bureau chief for the paper (Leaks spark debate, 2002). Doyle said reporters' "guiding theology" dictates that revealing information is better than keeping it secret. There was no question something would be published from the report, Doyle said (personal communication, January 7, 2003). It was only a matter of what.

The editors, Doyle said, attempted to balance national security concerns with the benefit this could have for open public discussion on nuclear policy. Details about specific numbers of warheads were left out. "That was a level of detail that was so far down in the weeds it wouldn't have been of interest to readers," Doyle said. "And people in the nuclear strategy community said that was the most sensitive part of the report." However, information about the new direction in nuclear policy was relevant to readers, Doyle said. "Here you have the administration formulating a new strategy with enormous implications for foreign policy and nuclear proliferation, in to which the public had not been allowed to know about. We did a lot of good by letting the public know what the government was about to do." (personal communication, January 7, 2003).

Following publication of the report, Pentagon officials declined to talk to the media about the specifics, but they did further explain the nation's direction in nuclear proliferation. It opened the discussion, and arms control advocates expressed their views strongly. "For 56 years, the world has avoided nuclear weapons use despite many grave crises. The Bush administration is now dangerously lowering the threshold for wreaking nuclear devastation," said John Isaacs, president of the Council for a Livable World (Schweid, 2002, p. 1).

Government officials denounced the leak. Tim Sample, staff director of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, called it "a break down in our security discipline" (p. 1). He also said because there is no threat of prosecution, people are not afraid of providing information to the press.

Also, government officials said that not only could such information tip other countries off to U.S. strategy, but it also could hurt diplomatic relations. Russian officials expressed dismay at the government report, and it put a wrinkle in the vice president's plans to visit the Middle East the day after the story broke. Secretary of State Colin Powell and other senior administration officials gave public assurances there were no plans on President Bush's desk for attacking Iraq or any other nation (Schweid, 2002, p. 1). Just a few days later, however, at a press conference on March 14, President Bush announced that he would not rule out using nuclear weapons against rogue nations, including Iraq.

Least-prepared cities

Terrorists now know that America's largest cities least prepared for a terrorist attack are New Orleans, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Milwaukee, Boston and Detroit. A *CNN* special report on January 17, 2002, listed the country's 30 largest cities and their level of preparedness for a terrorist attack. The scale was developed by analyzing a variety of data, including police officers per 1,000 population, transportation data, hospital information and surveys of emergency management directors. The city most prepared? New York.

Mike Fish, the reporter who did the story, along with an earlier story about the nation's 25 busiest airports most vulnerable to terrorist attack, said the story was done with care. "We were determined to produce a thoughtful package that would both enlighten and address people's concerns, yet at the same time wouldn't serve as a blueprint for would-be terrorists and criminals," he said (Fish, 2002, p. 12). "We found this also to be the top concern of the experts who were interviewed or assisted us in evaluating the cities."

Fish said he decided to leave out some data that could have been helpful to terrorists. He said he was satisfied with the results. "If a terrorist wants to know who to attack, they'll do their own research and find out on their own. Our reporting isn't going to tip them off. But it did provide results." (personal communication, November 13, 2002).

On September 12, 2002, *CNN* aired a follow-up story, explaining how many of the cities previously ranked low had instituted more stringent security measures, modified incident response plans and gained support for more funding (Siff, 2002).

Worst-case chemical scenarios

OMB Watch, a nonprofit public interest group, has posted on its Web site since 2000, executive summaries of risk management plans submitted by companies and government agencies that store chemicals. The plans detail the types of chemicals stored, how much and the street address.

The group decided to keep the summaries online after September 11, despite the Environmental Protection Agency's request that they be removed. The information remains searchable by city at OMB Watch's Right to Know Network online site, and an e-mail address is required in order to have the reports delivered electronically.

"Our board weighed it carefully," said Gary Bass, OMB Watch executive director (personal communication, December 3, 2002). "They (the EPA) claimed we were aiding terrorists. There is one record that describes chemicals being stored near two schools and a daycare center, and the critics said it was a blueprint for terrorism. But don't the parents of these children want to know their children are in that danger zone? They can do something about it. Hiding the information doesn't make the community safer."

Bass said one factor in the decision to continue providing that information to the public was the fact that it could be easily obtained anyway from a variety of other sources. "Terrorists can get that information anyway by talking to people who work at the company, getting a job at the company or from other data that is publicly available," Bass said. In a similar case, Bass said, public records brought to light a 90-ton rail car filled with chlorine at a wastewater treatment plant near the White House. The rail car has since been moved.

Information dissemination does have its limits, Bass said. For example, he said he would not publicize floor plans to nuclear plants. "There are some lines to be drawn. That information doesn't help the community. However, I do want to know what dangers are in my community."

Guiding principles for balancing interests

As a result of *CNN* airing the most vulnerable cities, those cities are more prepared now and more lives might be saved if they are attacked. Because of OMB Watch, people throughout the country are able to take steps to protect themselves from accidental chemical releases near their homes, which is more likely to happen than a terrorist attack. And information such as that reported by *The Los Angeles Times* about nuclear arms brought hidden agendas out in the open for frank discussion and public discourse.

The journalists in the three case studies all sided with disclosure and truth telling, but they still considered how they could minimize harm to the country. The *CNN* reporter left some details out of the vulnerable-city reports. *The Los Angeles Times* did not report the specific numbers and types of nuclear warheads in the nation's arsenal, and OMB Watch requires an e-mail for gaining information, which may discourage requesters who have bad intentions.

In all cases the journalists made the decisions on their own, consulting their consciences, their peers, experts, government officials, and other sources. The cases demonstrate that reporters can make their own decisions without imposition by the government or outside groups. Journalists, policy makers and the public do not have to make their decisions in a vacuum. Based on the ethical principles of presenting information to the American public that can help them while still trying to minimize potential harm, good ethical decisions can be made.

Sissela Bok might encourage decision makers to go through a three-step process, similar in deciding whether to publish information at the expense of invading someone's privacy (Bok, 1983). Bok suggests a person struggling with whether to publish potentially harmful information first consult his or her conscience. Could the information help society, perhaps in defending against terrorists? Will the information aid terrorists? Are there ways to minimize harm?

Second, seeking expert advice is important in making ethical decisions, Bok said. The CNN reporter consulted a panel of terrorism experts to make sure the reporting was accurate and helpful, but not helpful to terrorists. Reporters can go beyond the technical experts, however, and consult other thinkers, living or dead, in contemplating ethics. For example, one potential media expert in the area of making ethical decisions during times of war is Edward R. Murrow. As he covered the bombings in London during World War II he felt he was operating out of morality, integrity, and reason (Godfrey, 1993, Leslie, 1988). His research method was to hold a mirror to society and report what was seen. He was principled and followed a strict, religion-based code from his Quaker family upbringing.

Third, journalists can conduct conversations with the people involved. *The Los Angeles Times* explained to government officials what they were planning to publish in order to let them make their case for what could harm national security. The *CNN* reporter not only talked to experts, but he considered his viewers and what they might think, as well as the victims of terrorism and their family.

Based on Bok's suggestions for ethical reasoning as well as the discussed philosophies and practical examples, journalists and public officials can ask themselves three questions when considering whether to release or publish sensitive government information:

1. Is there benefit to society?

    If so, the presumption should be to publish the information. Is it a need to know, not just a right to know? Journalists should determine this independently and not allow government to make the call. Only through discussion and exposure can problems in society be fixed. Vulnerabilities of cities, dangerous chemicals stored in neighborhoods and public policy that could lead to nuclear war are issues that are best discussed openly.

2. Is there a specific reason to believe the information could be used by terrorists?

    Consult experts and consider arguments from government officials. The reasoning should be specific and definite, not vague. A decision not to publish the information should be considered only if the danger would be imminent and certain. The burden is on the government to prove harm would result because of publication of the information.

3. Are there ways to minimize potential harm?

    Can some information be left out that may not be needed for public discourse? Often the most sensitive information, such as the number and types of warheads in the U.S. arsenal, also is the least interesting or valuable for public discussion. For example, following September 11, the Federation of American Scientists removed from its Web site about 100

> pages out of several hundred thousand pages because of detailed floor plans and building layouts of nuclear power plants and weapons storage facilities. "A picture of a fence or lock of a building in Virginia doesn't add value to the discussion about public policy," said Steven Aftergood, director of the group's Project on Government Secrecy. "Like everyone else, we want to be responsible citizens." (personal communication, December 3, 2002) Journalists should take the time to weigh the options, as *The Los Angeles Times* did before publishing the nation's nuclear-arms strategy. Competition should not lead to rushed decisions.

The government, too, should consider adopting suggestions to help public officials who struggle with complying with open record laws while still protecting sensitive information. The current laws and conflicting government memos appear to be causing confusion. "The administration should enunciate a clear set of guiding principles, as well as an equitable procedure for implementing them and allowing for appeal of adverse decisions," states Aftergood, of the Federation of American Scientists (Aftergood, 2002, p. 1).

Conclusion

Terrorism has changed how the United States views the world, itself and public information. The war is here, among us, where the troops now include the citizens. The troops need information to fight this war, even if it means tipping off the enemy. How Americans react to the threats could shape the future of democracy and the First Amendment.

As information is controlled and made secret by the government, advocates from all political spectrums are challenging the reductions of civil liberties. The conservative Heritage Foundation has joined with the ACLU in opposing the government's attempts to whittle away at civil rights in the name of national security. Based on ethics philosophy, the media have an ethical, legal and moral duty to continue to aggressively report public information that furthers public dialogue and understanding about the threats around us.

"Our democracy demands an open society," said Bass of OMB Watch (personal communication, December 3, 2002). "Any information can and will be misused in an open society. We have to minimize harm. 9/11 has scared the heck out of us and we are able to forego our rights to make us safer. I don't think the public understands that openness can make us safer."

Open reporting can be done with positive results, as demonstrated by *CNN*, *The Los Angeles Times* and OMB Watch. Solid reasoning can be applied through principled questions, such as whether the information could benefit society, whether it could cause imminent harm, and whether that harm could be minimized. Journalists must seek to minimize harm and raise their standards of fact checking and take time in making decisions. The rush to beat the competition should not lead to hasty judgments. More is at stake than prior to Sept. 11, 2001.

It is possible there will be journalists who report information that inadvertently helps terrorists kill Americans. Not all media will conduct themselves in ways that are approved of by the government, public or their peers. That is the price Americans pay for an open society. Despite the risks, journalists have a duty and an ethical obligation to report information that can help citizens defend themselves in an age of terrorism.

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Bad Apples or Rotten Culture?

Media Discourse on the Corporate Scandals of 2001 and 2002

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By David A. Craig
Associate Professor
Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Oklahoma
860 Van Vleet Oval, Room 120-B
Norman, OK 73019-2051
Phone: (405) 325-5206
E-mail: dcraig@ou.edu

and

Kristina K. Turner
Master's student
Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Oklahoma

Abstract

Bad Apples or Rotten Culture?
Media Discourse on the Corporate Scandals of 2001 and 2002

This paper evaluates 263 print media pieces and broadcast segments to assess how the discourse of 18 major news organizations addressed the ethical dimension of the scandals involving Enron and other companies. Ethical discussion emerged at several levels – individual, organizational, professional, and social – in a variety of formats including in-depth analytical reporting, commentary, and question and answer. Though much of the discourse was not in depth, the best examples point to ways that news organizations can effectively address business ethics.

BAD APPLES OR ROTTEN CULTURE?
MEDIA DISCOURSE ON THE CORPORATE SCANDALS OF 2001 AND 2002

The year before corporate scandals became front-page and top-of-broadcast news, Diana B. Henriques, a financial writer for the New York Times, sized up the pervasive influence of business in American life:

> Business now dominates every corner of the world we cover to a degree that would have been unthinkable two generations ago. Whether a journalist today covers sports, health care, prisons and criminal justice, the performing arts, science, city hall, or public schools, business is there, making deals and making money, setting the agenda, writing the rules, shaping the values by which the game of American life will be played. (Henriques, 2000, pp. 119-120)

The broad role of business in society makes it an appropriate topic for thoughtful news coverage and public debate, and for critical analysis of the quality of this discourse. This study qualitatively examines the discourse on one widely covered series of business-related events: the corporate scandals of 2001 and 2002 involving Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and other companies. It focuses on how journalists and others who appeared in the media portrayed the ethical dimension of these scandals in several major newspapers and magazines, on commercial network television, and on public television and radio. It also addresses distinctive strengths of the portrayals in different media.

These scandals were one of the biggest stories in business ethics in recent years. They resulted in harm to employees, companies, and broader confidence in the economy, and they prompted soul-searching about the state of ethics in the corporate world and society at large.

This study is important for media scholars because relatively little systematic research has been done on ethics coverage, and even less on coverage of ethics in business. In addition, as the literature review for this paper will show, the studies that examined ethics coverage in depth have focused on issues where there has been substantial ethical debate, not situations of agreed-on ethical wrongdoing. This study, grounded in the assumption that good ethics coverage is a also matter of good media ethics (Craig, 1999), explores how thoughtful ethical discussion can follow from clear cases of wrongdoing.

These examples of thoughtful discussion are also potentially useful for journalists trying to ask good questions and write effectively about business ethics. Though it is unlikely that all news outlets will go deeply enough into business stories to address the ethical dimension, business news as a whole is receiving broad attention from editors. Lewis Simons wrote that, "in recent years business news has been, far and away, the fastest-growing editorial segment in the nation's newspapers, if not in all media" (1999, p. 56).

Literature Review

Media scholars including Barkin (1982), Greenwald (1990), Mayo and Pasadeos (1991), and McShane (1995) have studied business coverage during the past few decades. A few studies have touched on ethics coverage at least by implication, but these have not squarely focused on ethics or addressed this dimension in depth. Hynds (1980), who surveyed daily newspapers about business news, found that most newspapers of 50,000 or more circulation had published business exposes (likely a matter of individual or corporate ethics) during the previous year, and that half had done stories on how corporations wield power (a matter of corporate ethics with broader implications for society). Percentages were substantially lower for smaller newspapers. Dominick (1984) found that, among business topics, network TV newscasts devoted the second-largest number of minutes to kickbacks, fraud, and related topics with an ethical dimension. In neither study, though, was the stated focus on the coverage of ethics.

Tumber (1993) also tiptoed into the ethical realm in a study of British coverage of business. He found that white-collar crime and tales of sex and scandal were big news in the 1980s and early 1990s. He said it was "interesting to note how mixed up many of the items and features became in the companies' activities and in the ethics of business practice" (1993, p. 351), but he did not spell out the details of how business ethics was explicitly addressed, if it was. He also argued, more broadly, that scandal stories may serve to help the public question institutions – a role that fits with the aim of broadly addressing the ethics of business through journalism. Fursich (2002), studying U.S. newspaper coverage of the merger of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler, also pointed indirectly to a broader critical role for media in ethics coverage by noting that the coverage failed to point out "the international implications of global capitalism" and focused instead on a "narrow 'tit-for-tat' comparison" (p. 367), while also portraying American-style business practices as superior. Thus, although neither of these studies focused on ethics, both implied concern with ethics coverage – including social-level concerns.

Discussion in the journalism professional press in recent years has also pointed to concerns about business ethics coverage – but again without substantial, explicit focus. Before the fall of Enron, Columbia Journalism Review's November/December 2000 issue focused on "News in the Age of Money." In it, Henriques (2000) explored the rise of business journalism while calling for a return to writing for readers as "citizens" rather than "investors." Poole (2000) questioned whether journalists "over-celebrate the New Wealth" – a prescient statement given what would soon come to light – and Goozner (2000) criticized the press for failing to cover economic problems. After the fall of Enron, Nieman Reports presented 10 articles in a section titled "Reporting on Business: Enron and Beyond." Among other things, these pieces assailed uncritical reporting by financial media during the 1990s (Madrick, 2002), offered advice for more critical reporting post-Enron (Behr, 2002; Solomon, 2002), and traced Wall Street Journal reporting on Enron that helped bring down the company (Steiger, 2002). The issues these professional publications explored imply a need for reporting that raises ethical questions about corporations and the economy.

Outside the explicit realm of business coverage, one other study addressed ethics in a way that connects with concerns about business. Craig (2000), in a study of major news organizations' coverage of the ethics of genetic testing, found ethical issues of autonomy and justice implied in relation to concerns that insurance companies or employers might misuse results of tests that indicate a person might later develop a genetically linked disease.

Craig (2000) and other studies on coverage of bioethical topics – abortion (Patterson and Hall, 1998), physician-assisted suicide (Craig, 2002), cloning (Hopkins, 1998; Craig, 2001), and genetic screening (Chadwick and Levitt, 1997) – have used ethical theory to discuss aspects of media discourse. In all of these cases, however, the topics have been matters in which there has been ethical debate, whereas in the case of the coverage of the corporate scandals, the focus was on ethical wrongdoing, its causes, and its aftermath.

Analytical Framework

Addressing ethics coverage more broadly, Craig (1999) proposed an analytical framework aimed "at assessing coverage of a variety of topics that have a strong ethical dimension involving public and professionals -- in medicine, science, business, law and public policy, or other areas" (pp. 24-25). The analysis in the present study is grounded in this framework, in particular in its use of four levels of analysis: individual, organizational/institutional, professional, and social.

In this framework, stories are to be evaluated "based on how thoroughly they portray the ethical issues relevant to a topic, the parties connected with those issues, the levels at which the ethical issues play out [individual, organizational/institutional, professional, and social], and the legal backdrop for those issues" (p. 17). Stories on topics with significant ethical implications are themselves evaluated as ethical if they pay more than passing attention to ethics, use several relevant parties as sources, give some attention to any relevant legal issues, and examine the topic at more than one level – for example, addressing the responsibility of a corporation that reduces its work force as well as looking at the impact on individual workers.

Normatively, this framework's assumptions about journalism are grounded in the social responsibility (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947; Siebert et al., 1956; Schramm, 1957; Rivers, Schramm & Christians, 1980) and communitarian (Christians et al., 1993) perspectives, which emphasize the role of journalists in serving society. On this basis, some attention to the ethical dimension of news is viewed as an affirmative obligation of journalists. This normative grounding is open to criticism both from a libertarian perspective (Merrill, 1974; Merrill, Gade, & Blevens, 2001) that would question calling ethics coverage an obligation of individual journalists and from postmodernist viewpoints (for example, Rorty, 1989) that would question the validity of all normative foundations. The authors would argue that the framework reflects a view of the nature of humans that more fully accounts for them as persons in relation to others than libertarianism (Christians et al., 1993), and can be justified with or without reference to moral universals. This perspective also is faithful to a longstanding strand of journalistic practice that has placed priority on addressing social problems.

The assumption within the framework that good ethics coverage should address multiple levels of analysis – the focus of attention in this paper -- is based on the concerns that professional ethics literature (for example, Bayles, 1989, and Kultgen, 1989; see Craig, 1999) raises about the need to discuss ethics at each of these levels. Kultgen argued that "The analysis of professional ethics, as a set of principles for individual acts, must be worked out in correlation with a social philosophy, with both descriptive and normative elements, for professions as institutions" (1989, p. 7). Though Kultgen's argument defines institutions more broadly than this framework does, he makes clear that full attention to professional ethics means addressing it at multiple levels from the individual to the social. However, it is important to note that the framework does not set the bar at comprehensive coverage of all levels in all stories on ethics – an impossible ideal. Rather, it calls for addressing more than one level of analysis in a body of coverage and in individual in-depth stories.

This framework, which represents the only model that scholars have developed for ethics coverage, thus incorporates issues raised by ethicists as a lens for critiquing coverage. Although the framework allows for evaluation of coverage on several dimensions – such as portrayal of breadth of sourcing in addition to levels of analysis -- each of the components encompasses a broad enough area for evaluation that it also enables in-depth critique in each of these areas. In the present study, though the authors did not set out with a focus on levels of analysis, it became evident during the reading of the discourse that this dimension represented a major area for evaluation in the pieces studied.

Method

The study examined 263 print pieces and broadcast segments from 18 news organizations with substantial and, in most cases, national audiences: three newspapers of national interest (the

New York Times, Washington Post, and USA Today),[1] the key newspaper from Enron's hometown (the Houston Chronicle), three newsmagazines (Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report), three major business magazines (Business Week, Fortune, and Money), six commercial television networks (CBS, ABC, NBC, CNBC, CNN, and Fox), public television (PBS), and public radio (NPR).[2] The print pieces and broadcast segments appeared from late 2001 after problems at Enron came to light, to the end of 2002, through the time of year-end pieces reflecting on the scandals. They include a wide variety of discourse: news reports and analyses, commentaries by both journalists and others, a few letters to the editor, and question-and-answer and news talk-show segments. This variety was included because of the potential for the public to hear ethical discourse from all of these sources and out of an interest in exploring how this discourse appeared in different formats and different media.

The discourse examined was obtained through Lexis-Nexis. Transcripts were used for the broadcast segments because the focus was on the language of ethical discourse. The focus on verbal narrative is justifiable because this language is a primary carrier of ethical content in all media – since nuances of ethics emerge through distinctive language and language is a central element across media, regardless of what a piece does with photos, audio, or video. Examining the content and format of verbal messages allows comparison across media about how the ethical angle was presented.

A preliminary search for coverage found thousands of stories about Enron and other corporate scandals. The larger preliminary set of pieces was narrowed for examination based on whether the pieces paid significant attention to ethics – stating or implying ethics[3] in the opening or addressing it for the equivalent of at least a few paragraphs later in the piece. Pauly, in discussing sampling in qualitative research, wrote: "In examining newspaper coverage of a controversial issue, for instance, the researcher might first skim the coverage to discern the moments of most intense debate, then go back and read in depth the coverage at those key moments" (1991, p. 12). The pieces examined in this study reflect the moments of most intense (though not always lengthy) media discourse on the ethical dimension of the corporate scandals.

During the reading of the chosen pieces, a preliminary list of ethical themes was developed inductively based on topical focuses that recurred across pieces. One overarching theme emerged as dominant: the question of whether a few individuals or companies ("bad apples"), or broader corruption in business life or society, was responsible for the scandals. (In some cases, blame was spread among these.) This theme appeared in nearly all of the print pieces and broadcast segments.

Strong examples – pieces where this theme was addressed directly or in an extended way, especially at the opening – were examined with attention to the details of their ethical language and the format in which they were presented. The format of the pieces was deemed potentially important because of previous research that has pointed to the power of commentary in covering ethics (Craig, 2002) and because of an interest in exploring what formats offer the greatest opportunity for ethical depth. Because the bad apples versus corrupt culture theme connects with the concerns of Craig's (1999) four levels of analysis for ethics coverage -- individual, organizational/institutional, professional, and social – the elements of the theme in these stories were placed under one or more of the four levels.

Findings

This section will address how the theme surfaced at different levels and in different formats in the discourse, especially in some of the ethically strongest segments. Because of the differences in presentation across media, the segments will be discussed by medium: magazines, newspapers, commercial television, and public TV and radio. (Public TV and radio were separated because of the distinctives of the long-form, non-commercial formats versus stories on commercial television.)

Magazines

The 38 magazine pieces, perhaps not surprisingly, include some of the most powerful examples of extended articles addressing ethical issues. Some of the strongest portrayals of ethical concern came in cover stories or other investigative pieces that were based on significant reporting but also included strong commentary that helps to frame the ethical issues for readers. The focus in these reported pieces is beyond the individual level to the organizational, professional, and – to some extent – the social level.

Such an analytical story appeared in Business Week (Byrne, 2002). The fifth paragraph said many academics who had held up Enron as a model in the late 1990s

> are now scurrying to distill the cultural and leadership lessons from the debacle. Their conclusion so far: Enron didn't fail just because of improper accounting or alleged corruption at the top. It also failed because of its entrepreneurial culture -- the very reason Enron attracted so much attention and acclaim. The unrelenting emphasis on earnings growth and individual initiative, coupled with a shocking absence of the usual corporate checks and balances, tipped the culture from one that rewarded aggressive strategy to one that increasingly relied on unethical corner-cutting. (Byrne, 2002)

The frame of Enron's problem as one of its corporate culture – an issue at the organizational level – is developed through a variety of sources in the story.

Another analytical piece, under the headline "How a Titan Came Undone," ran in U.S. News & World Report and again targeted the ethical health of the organization. The second paragraph of the story put it this way:

> To most people, Enron's implosion late last year was sudden and startling, accompanied by revelations that executives used secret partnerships to hide huge debt, wildly inflate profits, and line their pockets. But a closer look shows that the collapse of the nation's seventh-largest company was virtually preordained. Over the years, Enron made a steady series of moves--financial, ethical, and cultural--toward what would become its abyss, so that when failure finally came, the last few strides weren't long ones. Before there were partnerships like Raptor and Chewco, there were warnings about cooking the books. Before that, an "old economy" pipeline psychology had yielded to a best-and-brightest "new economy" ethic, where the fact of doing deals came to rival whatever the deal itself might be. At the start, just as at the end, was an all-consuming obsession with debt. Enron didn't lurch into crisis. It began a march there in 1985, on the very day it was born. (Barnes et al., 2002)

This analysis, developed through detailed reporting, places the collapse of Enron in a long-term context rather than providing a surface condemnation.

Two cover stories, both in Fortune, address corporate ethics at the broader level of the profession. One of them (Gimein, 2002), after noting the "ever-lengthening parade of corporate villains," ethically indicts the business world:

> These people and a handful of others are the poster children for the "infectious greed" that Fed chairman Alan Greenspan described recently to Congress. But by now, with the feverish flush of the new economy recognizable as a symptom not of a passion but of an

> illness, it has also become clear that the mores and practices that characterize this greed suffused the business world far beyond Enron and Tyco, Adelphia and WorldCom. (Gimein, 2002)

The story develops this statement based on a study of stock sales by executives and directors at more than 1,035 money-losing companies. The study found that "a total haul of $23 billion went to 466 insiders at the 25 corporations where the executives cashed out the most" (Gimein, 2002). Because the story is based on in-depth reporting and not merely biting rhetoric, it more powerfully underlines for readers the ethically questionable activity of many people who occupied high positions in the corporate world.

A World@Large column by "The Editors" of U.S. News & World Report went beyond the business world to set the Enron scandal in the broader context of society (The Editors, 2002). The column pointed to -- among other situations in addition to Enron – sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, reports of plagiarism by historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Stephen Ambrose, and the falsified resume of football coach George O'Leary. Then it asked:

> What's going on here? Doesn't anyone play by the rules? On Wall Street, the one-two punch of greed and competition is to blame, says journalist James Stewart. His coverage of the 1987 stock crash and insider-trading scandals earned him a Pulitzer and became the foundation of his bestseller Den of Thieves. All that money sloshing around, he says, "can drive people into a frenzy. . . . You're thrown in that competitive situation at a very early age and exhorted to win at all costs." And that win-at-all-costs ethic, critics say, is the foundation of the cheating culture. ("Our Cheating Hearts," 2002)

After making its case for this thesis, the column ends with an appeal to readers to offer their thoughts. Thus, the column not only brings to readers a question of social ethics, but also invites them directly to think about it and react.

Newspapers

As with the magazine stories, the 108 newspaper pieces that deal best with ethics include reported news pieces. But many of the strongest pieces were commentaries – editorials or columns, both by staff members and by outside commentators. Some of these commentaries place ethical problems with individuals or categories of individuals, but a number address ethics at the organizational and professional levels, and beyond.

The New York Times, which accounted for many of the commentaries (as well as the largest number of ethics-related pieces total), ran an op-ed piece by Warren Buffett, chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., in which he broadly criticized "the legal, but improper, accounting methods used by chief executives to inflate reported earnings" – in particular, stock-option accounting and the assumptions made about returns in pension funds. "The aggregate misrepresentation in these two areas dwarfs the lies of Enron and WorldCom," he said (Buffett, 2002). Referring to the "bad apples" metaphor, he closed the column by directly challenging CEOs to change their behavior:

> C.E.O.'s want to be respected and believed. They will be -- and should be -- only when they deserve to be. They should quit talking about some bad apples and reflect instead on their own behavior.
>
> Recently, a few C.E.O.'s have stepped forward to adopt honest accounting. But most continue to spend their shareholders' money, directly or through trade associations, to lobby against real reform. They talk principle, but, for most, their motive is pocketbook.

> For their shareholders' interest, and for the country's, C.E.O.'s should tell their accounting departments today to quit recording illusory pension-fund income and start recording all compensation costs. They don't need studies or new rules to do that. They just need to act. (Buffett, 2002)

Buffett addressed CEOs as individuals, but he also drew a much broader conclusion about the state of professional practice at the level of top executives, particularly in relation to accounting. By using language that directly confronted CEOs, he brought the ethical challenge home powerfully to those who might be able to change the ethical climate.

A Week in Review column in the Times also raised questions at the professional level – and implied a broad concern about the health of capitalist society, based on the threat to investors' confidence in capital markets:

> To those inured to corporate wrongdoing -- perhaps by the insider trading scandals or the savings and loan debacle of recent decades -- the latest scourge of white-collar malfeasance might seem like more of the same, with greedy executives cutting corners to make a profit. But in truth, the corporate calamities of the new millennium are of a different ilk, one that challenges the credibility of the financial reporting system, and in turn the faith of investors in the capital markets -- the very engine that has driven capitalism to its success. (Eichenwald, 2002)

Eichenwald (who also referred to "bad apples" in relation to dishonest corporations) said it was not important that many other corporations are probably honest because the actions of a few have called into question the broader reliability of data and of checks and balances on the accuracy of data. By raising broad questions at the root of the success of capitalism, Eichenwald widens the view for readers from individual corporations or professional practice to the impact of corrupt practices on a society driven in large part by profit.

An editorial in USA Today also makes an eloquent argument that the problems in the business world are broader than a few individuals. It opens this way:

> The ever-expanding Enron scandal seems to expose a new villain or two daily. Just Tuesday, for example, auditor Arthur Andersen fired an employee who worked on the faulty Enron audits.
>
> But the problems exposed by Enron's collapse won't be solved by firing a few scapegoats -- or even by punishing CEO Kenneth Lay and a band of self-serving executives who got rich while bankrupting the company, much as they deserve it. Culpability spreads much further, and with impact far beyond Enron. So far, in fact, that there's reason to ask whether every agency and instrument designed to prevent flagrant corporate abuse hasn't been subverted.
>
> The auditors certainly failed, probably willfully. But so did securities analysts, bond-rating agencies and the company's board of directors.
>
> Each had an ethical or legal obligation to flag Enron's problems. Each had reason to suspect something was amiss. And each stood to gain financially by looking away. ("Who Will Protect Public?" 2002)

This editorial serves readers well because it points to an array of professionals and institutions – analysts, bond-rating agencies, the corporate boards – whose failure puts the actions of individuals in Enron in broader context. It carries the point forward by asking direct questions at several points -- "Where was Enron's board of directors?" "Where were the auditors?" "Where were the analysts?" – and pointing to implications of each that reach beyond the specifics of Enron.

It is worth noting that the Houston Chronicle offered relatively little in the way of analysis or opinion about the ethics of Enron (especially in relation to the New York Times) despite the newspaper's place in a large metropolitan area and its proximity to Enron. One of the most engaging pieces in the Chronicle noted in its opening that Enron had become a symbol of many evils:

> To liberals, it is a glorious example of the evils of unfettered capitalism. To conservatives, it represents a betrayal of the moral responsibility intrinsic in corporate leadership.
>
> Labor unions see a poster child for abuse of workers and their retirement funds. Advocates for tougher campaign finance laws see an unparalleled purchaser of political power. Wall Street pundits point to an emperor with no clothes and a parade of docile subjects in their own community who never dared to state the obvious. And former employees think they have a textbook case of elitist greed run amok. Everybody, it seems, has a special use for Enron, once a semi-obscure energy trader that has overnight become the sort of all-purpose villain not seen since the heyday of the robber barons. (Tolson, 2002)

Although in tone this piece pokes holes in overblown rhetoric, the author here presents a broad array of ethical vantage points on the wrongdoing at the company.

Commercial TV

The six commercial networks whose 92 stories were analyzed all dealt with ethics at levels beyond the individual. However, the traditional Big Three – ABC, CBS, and NBC –

focused more on individuals (for example, unethical behavior by Enron's chief executive, a good CEO, people who were hurt by the scandals, whistleblowers) than the cable networks studied – CNBC, CNN, and Fox. In contrast, the cable networks paid more attention to politics (for example, questions about President Bush's business ethics and fallout of administration connections with Enron) than the broadcast networks. Some of the most significant discussion of ethics came through talk-show or question-and-answer formats. However, ethics emerged in a variety of formats – and across levels of analysis.

The individual level surfaced in a short news story on ABCs "World News Tonight." Anchor Peter Jennings opened this way:

> As we have seen following the Enron affair and with some of the other companies, the ones who suffer the most are the employees who get blind-sided in events like this. Seventeen thousand WorldCom workers will soon be looking for new jobs. Their executives don't need to. Here's ABC's Erin Hayes. (Hayes, 2002)

The opening bluntly points to the impact on workers by using the words "suffer" and "blindsided," and by juxtaposing WorldCom employees' impending search for work with the fact that executives do not have to look for jobs. The impact on employees comes home more fully later in the story when an unidentified worker says: "The morale is shot right now. Everyone's just sort of on eggshells, wondering who's going to be next and who's gone" (Hayes, 2002). The ethical consequences of wrongdoing at the company are clear.

Ethics is also evident at the individual level in a much longer piece, a CBS "60 Minutes" profile of a good apple, Aaron Feuerstein, owner of Malden Mills, a textile company. Morley Safer opens the piece this way:

> When it comes to doing business, there are two extremes: There's the Enron way, and there's the Malden Mills way. Both companies have filed for bankruptcy protection, but that's the only thing they have in common. Enron appears to have gone out of its way—there's no other word for it—to screw many of its employees out of their retirement money, while a number of executives cashed in big time. On the other hand, Malden Mills, the textile company in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that invented the fabric Polartec, went out of its way to help its employees, even when the company suffered a shattering setback. (Safer, 2002)

The opening thus juxtaposes the ethical exemplar of Malden Mills (though not a business success at this point) against the ethically failed company. But much of the power of the piece comes because it portrays the heart of Feuerstein, who, as Safer put it, became "a national hero" for treatment of his workers. The story shows the benefit of focusing on an individual, even though the ethical lens should not be kept in that focus all of the time.

Ethical discussion surfaced at a number of points in talk-show programs such as NBC's "Meet the Press" and CNN's "Crossfire." One edition of "Meet the Press" featured Sen. Jon Corzine, a former CEO of Goldman Sachs; John Castellani, from The Business Roundtable; John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO; and Walter Wriston, former CEO of Citicorp. The length of the program and its focus this day on issues touching on business ethics enabled ethical matters to surface in a number of places – though not in great depth in any one place. For example, Andrea Mitchell questioned Wriston this way:

> Let me turn to Walter Wriston. For 17 years, you were the CEO of Citicorp. Are business executives greedier than they used to be? Or is this what always happens after a boom cycle?

> MR. WALTER WRISTON: I think in any boom cycle, you get excesses. And that's what is coming out in the papers today. I suppose two things, I would say is, one, there are a lot of programmatic things that you can do. And a lot of it has been done with the bills. There are over 300 bills—300 laws, now, on corporate fraud. We have one more today. But what really counts is the integrity and the character of the people who run the organizations. And you cannot legislate character, and you cannot legislate high integrity. So . . . the people of The Roundtable, for example, who are not involved in these kinds of things have to come forward and step up and restore to the American people the concept that people who are running these corporations do, in fact, have integrity. ("Meet the Press," 2002)

The extended answer shows the potential benefit of the question-and-answer format on talk shows (at least when those present are polite). Wriston had the chance to comment in detail, and he at least pointed to the central place of character and integrity at the individual level of the executive.

One other example of the talk-show format, from "Crossfire," provides a more blunt example of ethical comment. Again, the format allows an extended reply, but here the interviewee is social critic Michael Moore. He replies to a long lead-in from host Robert Novak that ends with:

> All Americans live better than they do anywhere in the world, and you don't like it because there are people who succeed more than others. Isn't that the fact?
>
> MOORE: That is correct, Bob. I agree with Pope John Paul II when he said that capitalism is a sin. This is an evil system, Bob. We believe in democracy, most of us Americans. We have democracy in our political system, but we don't have democracy in

> the economy. The average American does not have an equal say in what goes on with the money and how it operates in our system.
>
> And until we have a true democracy with our economic system, we're going to have a system where the top 10 percent are going to make off like bandits and everybody else is going to be scrambling for the crumbs, and that's the system we have. And it's an unfair system. It's unjust and it's immoral. ("CNN Crossfire," 2002)

Moore's bluntness would be evident in other formats, but the nature of the question-and-answer approach on a lengthy program enables him to spell out his thinking in more detail. In doing so, he raises ethical questions at the social level.

Public TV and Radio

The TV segments on Jim Lehrer's "NewsHour" on PBS and the radio segments on NPR (a total of 25) addressed all levels of ethical consideration, as a group, but especially above the level of the individual. The broad issue of corporate culture got significant attention. The strongest examples from these news outlets point to the value of a long-form interview show with calls from the audience, question-and-answer with an ethicist as the source, and a long-form reported piece.

One edition of NPR's "Talk of the Nation" call-in show dealt with corporate culture and ethics. Tom, a caller, had this to say:

> I have to tell you, I was in graduate school in business, and the accounting professor made the comment, to maximize your profit, you have to accelerate your receivables--it means what people owe you--and delay your payables, which is what you owe other people. I made the comment that that was immoral, and this is an exact quote from this professor. He says, "Morality has nothing to do with business." The younger people in

> the class said, 'Right on, bottom line, we agree.' And some of us--I'm a '60s child--who were older and coming back to college were horrified. I think what you ended up with was a amoral culture of bottom line mentality, and I don't think ethics was even on the radar screen. I think this entire generation of people just looked at the bottom line, how to maximize profit, what's the next quarter look like, and it allowed for this kind of highbinded dishonesty to fester. (Neary, 2002)

Tom's comments point to a professional mentality that divorces ethics from business, and he implies an unethical mindset at the social level. Because the show allows the time to hear from callers at this length, his comments come through in more than a sound bite.

An interview with an ethicist on NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday" (2002) points both to the value of the interview format, which allows extended comment (even though the segment is relatively short). Host Brian Naylor and Kirk Hanson of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University had this exchange (another direct use of "bad apples") that points to the professional and social levels:

> NAYLOR: Some attribute the recent corporate scandals to a widespread culture of greed, and others say it's just the misbehavior of a few bad apples. What do you think?
>
> Mr. HANSON: Well, I think that is the core question, to continue the metaphor. Is this just an issue of a few individuals like we've had over time, or is there something more systemic at stake? And I personally think there's something more systemic at stake, that we've just been through a very extraordinary period of what Alan Greenspan this week called 'infectious greed.' And I think that we have to put some substantial measures in place to deal with that. (Naylor, 2002)

Though the comments are relatively general at this point, the discussion moves soon into specific changes that Hanson feels are needed – especially in the perspective of CEOs. These comments point to concerns at the professional level beyond individual corporations and officers:

> CEOs have seen themselves as somehow winners in a great lottery, that once you become a CEO, you are entitled to substantial, excessive pay packages, that even if you fail you are entitled to some kind of substantial parachute as you depart. That's got to change. CEOs have got to see themselves more as people who are serving the employees and the shareholders and the other stakeholders, not enjoying winning the lottery. (Naylor, 2002)

The opening exchange thus enables Hanson to point to issues beyond the behavior of individuals and to lead into the more detailed discussion of the broad ethical problem.

A segment on the PBS "NewsHour" by business correspondent Paul Solman of WGBH in Boston shows the value of a long-form reported television piece. Lehrer introduces it broadly by saying that Solman has been examining "the growing problem of ethics and corporate America and Wall Street" (Solman, 2002). This segment, like the NPR interview, uses an ethicist as a source (Barbara Toffler, a business ethics professor). With her help, he presents historical background on business ethics. The piece also includes a visit to a business ethics class at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, as well as comments from the class instructor and from a leader in a group for corporate ethics officers. The report provides time to shed light on ethics from a number of vantage points.

Discussion

The articles and segments analyzed in this paper, as a group, meet what Craig (1999) called a "moral obligation" to address the ethical dimension at more than one level of analysis: individual, organizational/institutional, professional, and social. Or, to put it in terms of the overarching theme that emerged in the coverage, they addressed "bad apples" – both individuals and individual corporations – as well as concerns about corruption in the "orchard" (to borrow from "Lou Dobbs' Moneyline," 2002) of the business world, or in broader society. Though much of the discourse was not in depth, the strongest pieces paid more than passing attention to one or more of these levels.

Although the issues surfaced in a variety of formats, some of the best magazine pieces used a combination of strong commentary that put ethical problems directly before readers and significant reporting that fleshed out the rhetorical claims. Newspaper discourse was notable for its use of commentaries by both news organization staffers and outside contributors with business expertise to bluntly put the scandals in a context that extended beyond the individual companies or their executives to institutions that failed, the broad professional climate, and the impact on society. Commercial television pieces brought home the stories of individuals through both short and longer pieces, and showed the value (not always fully realized) of talk-show formats that allow extended and wide-ranging discussion. Public TV and radio shed light on corporate culture and showed the value of long-form reporting and interviewing, including listener call-ins, and the value of using ethicists as sources.

This study adds substantially to previous scholarly understanding of business ethics coverage. Hynds (1980) had noted widespread publication of business exposes and stories on how corporations wield power, but the study did not address in detail what these stories looked like. The articles in the current study – such as the magazine cover stories on the inner workings of Enron – show the anatomy of detailed exposes by major news organizations. The commentaries that put corporate wrongdoing in broader context show the factors at work that enabled these companies to exert their power in the marketplace. Dominick (1984) found that fraud and other business wrongdoing received attention on network TV; the current study shows how television can portray the impact of that wrongdoing and analyze its roots. In addition, this study fleshes out some of the ways in which, as Tumber (1993) put it, stories about scandal may help the public question institutions – for example, through blunt commentary that places wrongdoing in the broader context of corporate culture.

The current study also complements previous research focused on coverage of bioethical debates (e.g., Craig, 2000). While the bioethics coverage sometimes gave significant attention to arguments about ethical right or wrong, the business ethics discourse assumed the right or wrong on the part of the central actors and companies in the scandals. Much of the ethical discussion focused on reasons behind the wrongdoing – whether those were connected with individual executives and corporations or broader cultural factors. Like much of the bioethics coverage, the discourse did address consequences – in this case, impact on employees, the companies, the business world at large, consumer confidence, and the economy.

In underlining the value of analysis and commentary in covering the ethical angle, this study supports the findings of Craig's (2002) study of analytical and commentary pieces on physician-assisted suicide. As with that coverage, by bringing home a value-laden topic bluntly, commentaries in print media on business clearly lay out important ethical issues for readers to consider. However, the strength of the magazine stories that used both commentary and in-depth reporting highlights the fact that a strong reporting base – here, a detailed anatomy of wrongdoing – may do more to spur in-depth critical discussion than powerful rhetoric alone. The reporting may help foster this critical discussion by showing that the ethical breaches were real and not just based on claims of the commentator. In the case of clear wrongdoing, the potential for discussion (and therefore the most fruitful direction for questioning of interviewees) lies in the direction of ways that future wrongdoing can be prevented. If the commentary highlights possible root causes and the reporting backs up these assertions, readers can develop knowledgeable opinions – or perhaps even change practices in their own organizations.

As for broadcast media, this study shows the potential value of talk-show and question-and-answer formats for enabling some depth of ethical comment combined with contributions from a variety of sources. However, serious ethical discussion, particularly on commercial television, must vie with the pressure to entertain audiences. The commercial nature of the medium, then, may undermine deeper probing of the ethics of commercial practices in other fields – or, for that matter, in the media business itself. The tenor of discourse on public radio and TV – including thoughtful call-in commentary and use of ethicists as sources – underlines the value of public broadcasting as a complement to commercial TV in discussion of ethics.

In commercial media, it will probably remain difficult to carry on sustained or in-depth discussion – partly because of the limitations of formats, but also because ethics itself is often treated as a secondary, not a primary, angle. In sifting through stories on Enron and the other scandals to narrow the field for this study, it became clear that the coverage as a whole dealt little with ethics, and most stories that did deal with ethics went into little depth. The discourse on the events at Enron and the other companies, and related issues, tended to lack bigger-picture reflection apart from the specifics of behavior and events. Often, there was a tight focus descriptively on what was unethical without assessment or evaluation of the ethics of the activity.

It is important for readers and viewers to get information about events such as specific disclosures of wrongdoing or discussion of changes in law or policy. But in the long run, it is also important for them to get the broader ethical context for these details in a case where ethical implications are so evident and the stakes for individuals, companies, and the economy are so high. If more reporters and editors are to address the ethical context, there must be a change in priorities at news organizations. This change in priorities will be difficult to achieve in light of the constraints on journalistic resources because of media companies' own push for higher profit. Future research should address news media discourse about other cases of corporate wrongdoing, but also assess how well journalists are portraying the corporate practices of media businesses themselves.

Notes

[1] The Wall Street Journal was not available on Lexis-Nexis and was not used in this study.

[2] Totals of pieces examined from each news organization were: New York Times, 54; Washington Post, 23; USA Today, 13; Houston Chronicle, 18; Newsweek, 4; Time, 7; U.S. News & World Report, 2; Business Week, 9; Fortune, 15; Money, 1; CBS, 22; ABC, 19; NBC, 10; CNBC, 13; CNN, 17; Fox, 11; PBS, 13; and NPR, 12.

[3] The language mentioned ethics or related terms directly or pointed to wrongdoing, other matters of right or wrong, responsibility, or harmful or beneficial consequences.

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CONFLICTED INTERESTS, CONTESTED TERRAIN:

JOURNALISM ETHICS CODES THEN AND NOW

By Lee Wilkins,
Professor

And Bonnie Brennen,
Associate Professor

Missouri School of Journalism

208 Neff Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 884-4568
brennenb@missouri.edu

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CONFLICTED INTERESTS, CONTESTED TERRAIN: JOURNALISM ETHICS CODES THEN AND NOW

ABSTRACT

By analyzing ethics codes, a professional statement of what constitutes good work, this essay links codes to a theory of culture and history. It considers two early journalism ethics codes and assesses the latest *New York Times* ethics code in light of philosophical theory. The paper suggests that professional tensions outlined in *Good Work* are reified in the *Times* code -- and that history and culture may be less supportive of a positive outcome of this struggle over values than the insights of psychology might suggest. (86)

CONFLICTED INTERESTS, CONTESTED TERRAIN:
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The authors of the book *Good Work* (Gardner 2001) see tensions within professions as an opportunity to align professional aspirations with the enduring values of a particular domain. Indeed, it is when enduring values appear out of joint with contemporary expectations that professions have the opportunity to grow -- although not without struggle. Working almost exclusively from the domain of psychology, the authors pinpoint a professional struggle over core values that will define and direct journalism in the new century.

This paper joins a theory of culture and history with the insights of *Good Work*. By analyzing ethics codes, a professional statement of what constitutes good work, from different eras, this essay links codes to a theory of culture and history. It considers two early codes, the 1923 American Society of Newspaper Editors code and the American Newspaper Guild code of 1934. It briefly reviews scholarship surrounding codes of ethics and examines the latest *New York Times* ethics code in light of philosophical theory. The paper concludes by noting that the professional tensions outlined in *Good Work* are reified in the *Times* code -- and that history and culture may be less supportive of a positive outcome of this struggle over values than the insights of psychology might suggest.

This study of ethics codes is framed from a cultural materialist perspective that considers culture a "constitutive social process" (Williams 1977/1988, 19), the lived texture of an active and evolving social order. It is in experience, "the domain of the lived" (Hall 1989, 26), where consciousness and conditions intersect, that all practices are shaped and a cultural totality is created within a historical process. Culture encompasses common meanings, both known interpretations and new observations; it is the product of an entire society and is also created and continually remade by its individual members. Raymond Williams suggests that any understanding of culture must begin with a consideration of language. Rejecting the synchronic stress of a structuralist model that views language as the creation of arbitrary signs reproduced within groups, Williams sees language as a dynamic and continuous social process that is a necessary part of human self-creation.

Ongoing relations occur within a historical context, where language frequently takes on the "contradictory and conflict-ridden social history" (Williams 1981, 176) of a specific culture. Language is a socially shared, reciprocal activity, where meanings are embedded in active and ongoing relations within a specific historical context. Viewing language as an element of material social practice, Williams echoes both Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonio Gramsci in his fashioning of language as part of the dialectical process: "a persistent kind of creation and re-creation: a dynamic presence and a constant regenerative process" (Williams 1977/1988, 31). From this perspective, underlying differences in word usage and understanding often illustrate historically specific class-based social, economic, and political experiences.

Differentiating spoken words from written notations, Williams sees written language as a socially based form of material production. It is the process of creation, the act of composition and communication, within specific material and historical conditions that is significant. All written notions are considered cultural practices, part of an ongoing social process that is produced by a specific society, in a particular historical time, under distinct political and economic conditions. Rejecting a naïve bourgeois conception of the writer as a neutral agent, "free of ideology," who chooses to acquire particular positions, values, and commitments, Williams maintains that no writer, in the absolute sense, is actually free. Before any possibility of choice exists, each person is shaped by his or her native language. Born into a language shared with others, each person writes from inherited forms, commissioned by dominant institutions, based on pressures to think, feel, and write a particular way. Williams suggests that this cultural heritage runs deep and constitutes "our normal ways of living in the world, our normal ways of seeing the world" (Williams 1989, 85). Ultimately, cultural materialists consider all writing socially determined; it is an aligned process of composition, the interaction between the process of writing and the conditions of its production.

For cultural materialists, journalism codes of ethics may be seen as cultural practices existing within an ongoing social process. Ethics codes are explicit forms of practical communication, created in a historically specific society and produced under particular social, economic, and political conditions. From this perspective an analysis of ethics codes should consider the specific context surrounding the creation of the codes as well as the actual issues and concepts addressed in the codes. In addition, it is important to consider aspects of journalistic behavior that are exempt from these codes, because elements that are missing that a person might reasonably expect to see included in a code may also provide insights into the larger issues associated with the incorporation of specific journalistic ethics codes.

As material social practices, ethics codes provide formal expressions of historically specific relationships that may help to articulate a deeper understanding of contemporary conditions of journalism as well as the lived realities of the relationship between media and American society. Yet Williams suggests that ironically codes also imply that somewhere a completely understandable, or what he terms "in clear" message of the relationship exists (Williams 1977/1988, 169). In other words, in formalizing the duties and responsibilities of journalists, ethics codes may actually obscure that very relationship.

Journalism of the 1920s and 1930s reflected a period of social conflict and many newspapers emphasized entertainment, sex, and crime. Known as the time of "Jazz Journalism," during this era half-size newspapers called tabloids that focused on human sentiment, sports, and sensationalism became extremely popular.

In his 1937 history of daily newspapers in the United States, Alfred McClung Lee defines ethics codes as attempts by editors and other professionals to "rationalize" and "idealize" their journalistic practices (Lee 1937, 2). Lee differentiates ethics codes from editorial policy suggesting that editorial policy is the actual working principles that journalists use in their daily work which influences the pre-publication treatment of news as well as how sources of information are utilized.

The development of the first journalistic codes of ethics were a response to growing public disillusionment with the press especially following its coverage of World War I. Upton Sinclair's scathing indictment of journalism, *The Brass Check*, published in 1920, was a best seller and liberal magazines like the *Nation* and the *New Republic* campaigned for accuracy and balance in news coverage. Responding to public dissatisfaction with daily newspapers, editors formed the

American Society of Newspaper Editors (A.S.N.E.) in 1922 and set out to maintain the rights and dignity of the profession and try to establish ethical standards for journalistic conduct (Lee 1937, 653). In April 1923, the A.S.N.E. adopted seven "Canons of Journalism" which set forth ethical practices based on responsibility, freedom of the press, independence, sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality, fair play and decency.[1]

The "Canons of Journalism" are framed from a social responsibility perspective that maintains the public welfare is a fundamental concern of daily journalism. Freedom of the press is considered a "vital right" of public interest that must be guarded and protected. Newspapers should remain independent from private interests that are "contrary to the general welfare." Defining honest journalism as truthful, accurate, sincere, independent, and unpartisan, the code warns about the use of "private sources" that are unwilling to go on the record and offer information that cannot be verified. Suggesting that news stories should be bias free, the A.S.N.E. code does however, exempt "special articles," news stories and columns that are clearly advocacy or that are signed by the writer.

Invasions of privacy should be avoided unless the public right warrants such intrusion and editors are counseled to refrain from publishing unofficial charges "affecting reputation or moral character" without giving the person the opportunity to defend him/herself. Responding to charges of insincerity in the media, the code suggests that a deliberate focus on "base conduct" will only worsen the reputation of the press and suggests that newspapers limit their reportage of crime and vice.

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[1] The authors draw on the A.S.N.E. code reprinted in MacDougall (1941) for the specific language of the code.

The tone of this code is optimistic and seems to suggest that if newspapers follow the seven "Canons of Journalism" that the field will become more professional and public support will grow. The language used is temperate and encourages the adherence of its members rather than on insisting on their devotion to the code. Realizing that the organization does not have the authority to enforce the "Canons of Journalism," the code hopes that newspapers who pander to "vicious interests" will encounter public disapproval and be considered less professional than newspapers that focus on accurate and bias free news coverage.

Amid hearings and protests against the inequities of the daily newspaper section of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, that was strongly influenced by members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, editorial workers gathered at the home *New York World Telegram* columnist Heywood Broun and began planning a national organization of journalists. Officially founded in Washington D.C. on December 15, 1933, early goals of the American Newspaper Guild (A.N.G.) were to elevate the ethical and professional standards of print journalism and to improve the working conditions of its members through collective bargaining. At the first annual American Newspaper Guild convention, held June 5-8, 1934 in St. Paul, Guild members approved a code of ethics and passed a freedom of conscience resolution that may be seen to help provide necessary context for this ethics code.

The freedom of conscience resolution considers freedom of the press the public's right and journalist's responsibility rather than a privilege of owners and publishers to "exploit." It suggests that the "high calling" of journalism has been tarnished because newsworkers have been pressured by their employers to serve special interests rather than the public good. Ultimately the resolution challenges members of the guild to frame their work based on a mission of social responsibility and to strive for "integrity" in their reportage of news and to refuse to distort or suppress the news.[2]

Like the earlier seven "Canons of Journalism," the A.N.G. code of ethics is also framed from a social responsibility perspective and reflects the idealism of many of the founding members of the Guild. The code insists that editorial workers respect the rights of individuals and groups by crafting factual and fair news reports that accurately represent an "unbiased" account of the news. Warning newsworkers to resist being influenced by "political, economic, social, racial or religious prejudices," the code reminds journalists that all citizens are judged equal before the law and insists that all individuals be presumed innocent until they are convicted of a crime.

Conflict of interest is construed narrowly in the American Newspaper Guild code. Reporters are told that confidential sources are never to be compromised, even if an editorial worker changes jobs. Journalists are counseled that the sanctity of source relationship is a fundamental aspect of journalism and that they should refuse to reveal confidential sources of information to any court or to legal or investigative groups or organizations. The code also condemns the practice of editorial workers accepting money for publicity work that may prejudice their craft as "fair" reporters and finds the "acceptance by sports editors and writers of money from promoters of alleged sporting events" particularly egregious.

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[2] Brandenburg (1934) includes the Guild's code of ethics in his reportage of the American Newspaper Guild's St. Paul convention. The authors draw on this source for specific wording of the code.

Responding to early twentieth century journalistic practices that encouraged reporters not to cover Sacred Cows, that is influential people and issues contrary to newspaper policy, the code suggests Guild members should work with editors and publishers "to curb the suppression of legitimate news concerning 'privileged' persons or groups, including advertisers, commercial powers and friends of newspapermen." Concerned that business pressures were putting undue stress on newsrooms regarding the suppression of sensitive news, the code also suggests that the news be edited "exclusively" in the newsrooms rather than in the business offices of daily newspapers.

The balance of power definitely resides with the public interest in this code. Editorial workers are seen as employees who have a moral responsibility to craft accurate and unbiased news accounts and are accountable to the public. Reporters are expected to conduct themselves honorably and independently, in the newsroom and in public and should not attempt to "curry favor" with any other person. Again, this part of the code reflects an early twentieth century practice in which some newspaper editors and publishers encouraged editorial workers to "use influence with officials in matters other than the gathering of news."

The tone and the language used in crafting the 1934 American Newspaper Guild code is straightforward and dogmatic with few modifiers to soften the intended meaning. Reporters are given little room for exceptions or extenuating conditions or compromise actions. Such an unbending position is nicely illustrated in the code's designation of publicity as antithetical to news. The code specifically condemns the practice of running "publicity in the news columns in the guise of news matter" and finds the idea of political writers getting paid to write publicity particularly wrong. Scholarship of codes tends to lag behind the development of codes, but it, too, notes the fault lines along which a profession develops. The first journalism ethics codes reflected concerns of the Progressive Era and muckraking journalism. In this era, conflict of interest was framed as propaganda vs. the public welfare, another hallmark of Progressive thinking. Since codes of journalistic ethics serve as one marker for a profession, "the domain of the lived" at a particular historic time, scholarly study of codes can provide insight into the specific stresses and strains on the profession. Thus, scholarly publications about codes and ethics initially characterized the newspaper as having unequaled "force" in the contemporary world (Tablado 1926, 1).

In the 1930s and 1940s, as the profession reacted to World War I and the ethical lapses surrounding Teapot Dome, scholarship, too, focused on issues of balance and journalistic impartiality. Sensationalism and bias were the focus of several studies (Kingsbury and Hart, 1933a, 1933b, 1934a, 1934b). Other studies explored stereotypical headlines of crime (Baskette 1947), publication of what today would have been considered private facts about mental health as well as a confession (Kobre 1936), general pre-trial publicity (Perry 1938), the role of the media in war (Price 1943), and the impact of competition (Bird 1944) and the "scoop" mentality (Ebon 1945). Conflict of interest remained central, as is illustrated in the following commentary:

> It is difficult to understand why newspaper men seem to regard themselves immune to the laws of public opinion which other professions acknowledge and respect. No judge on the bench, sitting on important cases involving nice questions of judgment on the meaning of the law, would ever imagine for a moment that his reputation could survive if he habitually accepted, from litigants, gratuities and favors and preferential treatment. Newspapers do not differ greatly from the bench (Wiggins 1944, 153).

Law and ethics were confounded in scholarship of this era (Siebert 1946; Pember 1976; Thayer 1947; Davis 1953). However, in 1961 *Journalism Quarterly* printed what was arguably its first article to address an issue of practice -- staged photographs -- and frame it as an ethical problem (Wilcox 1961). Although the study found that public opinion differed from journalistic decisions, codes were not mentioned except to note a lack of professional agreement. Thus, the notion of a contradictory and conflict-ridden social history pervades academic analysis of codes or fragments of them.

It was not until the early 1980s that codes themselves became the focus of serious scholarship. The first issue of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* was devoted to codes. The descriptive work found that about six in ten news organizations surveyed had written codes -- most initially written within the previous 20 years and reviewed within the past five (Davenport and Izard 1985). Most codes were imposed by management -- an element that continues to characterize code development and which is meaningful in a consideration of the "domain of the lived". The majority of the codes dealt with an expanded notion of conflict of interest -- particularly whether journalists could participate in political activities of various sorts (exclusive of voting) and whether and how journalists could earn additional income. Emerging issues included financial conflicts of interest, conflicts of interest involving a spouse, family members or friends, and that management often was viewed as having different obligations from newsworkers.

The issues of enforcement and impact also were explored. Bukrow (1985/1986) found limited support among members of the Society of Professional Journalists for code enforcement within the organization itself. Bukrow concluded that journalistic faith in ethics codes was breaking down at the very time the public was seriously questioning the profession's ethics. Christians (1985/1986) noted that codes fulfill the function of moral sanction among peers, and that "enforced codes characterized by such specific guidelines can serve journalism professionals on the minimum level of what Henry Aiken labels rule obedience" (19). Christians also linked code enforcement with media accountability and the preservation of the public trust in the profession (as noted in the 1973 Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics). He also was among the first scholars to decouple legal reasoning, particularly regarding the First Amendment, from codes of ethics as moral documents

Finally, and significantly, scholars debated whether codes are effective exemplars of professional behavior. Elliott (1985/1986) suggested that codes most frequently codified "usual practice" but that they also could provide journalists with an understanding of minimally appropriate professional behavior and an articulation of professional ideals. This philosophical work tents to not imbed codes in a larger historical and cultural process.

Most recently, philosophical examinations have been followed by empirical work. Black and Barney (1985/1986) linked codes to stages of moral development, arguing that they work well for individuals whose behavior could be influenced by threat of punishment, reward, interpersonal accord, or rules of law and duty. Boeyink (1994) examined how codes of ethics were implemented in three newsrooms, concluding that the contents of the code were not as essential as whether management supported a discussion of ethical issues and whether those understandings permeated the staff. In a study that compared complaints to the national news council with the standards articulated in four different ethics codes, two for print and two for broadcast, Braman (1988) found that the reading and viewing public tended to place a somewhat different emphasis on elements of media behavior than did journalists themselves, at least in their written codes. Journalists tended to be proactive in terms of the watchdog role of the press, the public tended to place more emphasis on boundaries and tempering media activities. The public also asked that the media take special care when in a position of monopoly, and appeared uncomfortable with journalistic facts that questioned those in authority. This tension between public expectation and journalistic practice became part of the social process of the development of codes during the decade of the 1990s.

This notion of multiple influences on journalistic behavior was confirmed by scholars. Pritchard and Morgan (1989) found that "scholars and practitioners err if they assume that the promulgation of formal norms such as ethics codes directly influences journalistic behavior...formal norms are only one ingredient in a rich stew." The study suggested that the effect of codes is symbolic, an outward sign of the creation of a professional culture at a specific time in history.

In the most recent work, the move in the newest SPJ code toward accountability, has been analyzed (Glasser and Ettema 2002). "In a remarkable departure from earlier versions, the recently revised code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) concludes with a section that calls on journalists to 'Be accountable'"—"'to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.'" Glasser and Ettema note that in the unprecedented commitment to accountability, the code's authors want to shift the code itself away from a set of practices toward professional conduct which is validated through open and public debate.

In some ways, scholarship about codes has been disjointed and sporadic. However, there are some important and consistent findings. 1. Over time, codes have been perceived as within the domain of ethics and moral philosophy as opposed to law and precedent. This is important, because ethical thinking is generally stable, while professional practice itself changes. 2. Codes themselves can articulate both a set of rules for "normal journalistic practice" as well as an inspiration to the highest ideals in the profession. 3. The role and nature of management's response to developing codes and their application to owners as well as workers has been the focus of both passionate discussion and professional silence; 4. Whether and how journalists and their news organizations should be accountable for code violations is sometimes discussed, but with no resolution. In this sense, scholarship about codes and ethics has outlined the shape of the professional debate, including the areas most likely in contention. Certainly one of those has been conflicts of interest, and a brief review of philosophical thinking on the issue is in order before turning to analysis of a contemporary code.

Moral philosophy asserts that professionals generally acquire more obligations by virtue of their professional role and standing within various cultures. It is those roles that bind them to higher standards than those expected of "non-professionals". For example, human beings in general have a duty "not to harm," but the physicians' duty to avoid pain and suffering is heightened. Philosophy grants professionals heightened standing by grounding professional obligation in the common social good, a professional duty that is commonly mentioned in many media codes of ethics.

In general, then, conflict of interest can be defined as those conflicts that arise from performance within a professional role. Often, such conflicts manifest themselves as a conflict between what is morally expected of the average person and what is expected of that same person functioning in a professional role. For example, a parent might ask a child to tell the truth about a minor infraction; if that parent is a defense attorney working for a client, urging the client to tell the truth may not be the best professional advice. At other times, conflicts of interest can arise exclusively within the professional role. For example, attorneys in large firms have specfic guidelines to follow in case one attorney in the firm is hired by one party to litigation while another attorney in the same firm may already represent the "opposing side." While the foregoing is a broad definition, professional conflicts of interest tend to cluster around the following:

- Exploitation of a professional position for private advantage;
- Allowing financial, collegial, social or familial loyalties, both past and present, to interfere with professional loyalties;
- Placing self interest above duties to others.

At this level, conflict of interest seems straightforward. However, unlike many areas of professional ethics, discussion of conflict of interest includes the notion of perception -- a tricky construct because perception may not match reality but may still dominate how actions are understood by others. It is entirely possible for a professional not to have a conflict of interest as defined above but to, nevertheless, *appear* to have a conflict of interest that must be accounted for in professional performance. Take, for example, civil servants. They are legally required never to accept a variety of tangible or intangible rewards "under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of his government duties" (Gorlin 1986, 197). While buying the local director of social services a $10 lunch may not create an actual conflict of interest, it is the appearance that matters. Conflict of interest is one of few areas of professional ethics where perception of "reality" has equal standing in a moral sense with the actual reality. The goal here is twofold: first, to circumscribe the sorts of influences that can erode professional judgment, and second, to maintain the bond of trust and authority between professionals and the larger society.

Philosophy also suggests some remedies for conflict of interest. Disclosure is the most frequent, the rationale being that concealment of the conflict is part of what can make it so corrosive. However, it is considered only a partial remedy because disclosure does not assure lack of influence. Disclosure also carries its own risks, including a potential abandoment of privacy which most people, in most circumstances, would strive to maintain. A second partial remedy is a change in specific professional duties. Legislation adopted in the wake of the Enron/Arthur Anderson scandal employed this approach; accounting firms are no longer allowed to act as consultants -- a change of professional duties -- to clients for whom they also serve as auditors. Changing professional duties can help to discharge a conflict of interest when the field of potential professionals is expansive. However, when there are a limited number of professionals, or when the "new" professional works in the same firm as the professional with the conflict, changing duties can be more about appearance than actual outcome. Finally, and from a philosophical point of view least problematic, is the option of withdrawing from the problem and literally finding someone else. Real-life application is not so neat. Withdrawing from an important assignment can mean stalling a career. It is not easy to withdraw from love, marriage, or parenting, despite professional obligations. In many instances, the person with the conflict may be the most qualified professional-- and hence a partial remedy becomes the only solution.

Finally, all these remedies speak to individual actions. None speak to the actions of role imbedded in organizations (Davis and Craft, 2000). Despite this omission, it is important to note that philosophical thinking about conflict of interest has relatively stable over both time and various professions. Furthermore, many professional ethics codes link professional work with the social obligation of professionals to the larger culture that gives them special status. It is this link between the profession and the political -- as opposed to the economic -- culture that has become the contested ground of journalism.

Since perception is integral to the notion of conflict of interest, and since perception is often influenced by historic events, it is necessary to consider some of the contemporary influences on journalism before examining a recent code of ethics.

The decade of the 1990s certainly marked a time of historic professional stress for journalists. Among the best documented stressors were:

- The drive to maximize quarterly profit in an industry that had moved from privately owned to publicly traded;
- The conglomeration of ownership, with regulatory support, and the need to retire corporate debt that made mergers possible;
- New technologies, particularly those connected with the computer, which established media outlets viewed as potential profit centers but that also exploded the potential for competition from new organizations and individuals;
- The erosion of audiences for traditional newspapers and broadcast networks;
- The movement of women into the newsroom in significant numbers, and the impact of two-career families on news organizations;
- The escalating costs of libel insurance and the size of libel verdicts;

- Some notorious breaches of professional ethics that made news of their own accord;
- The focus on celebrity in American culture and the impetus such a focus provided for both news coverage, often of the trivial, and for how the culture viewed highly paid and promoted journalists themselves;
- The blurring of news and entertainment--particularly on prime time network television;
- The sophistication with which political actors "used" the news media for their own purposes, resulting in what some critics characterized as a denigration of the political discourse necessary in a democratic society;
- The dynamic impact of the 9/11 terrorists attacks on New York and Washington D. C., These events pushed news organizations toward more in-depth and politically-oriented news -- that kind that is most expensive to produce. They also led to increasing federal regulation as epitomized by the U.S. Patriot Act that legally constrained news organizations in ways that had not been seen since World War II;
- A continuing erosion--with some upticks--of the audiences' assessment of media credibility.

With all of these societal pressures, it is not surprising that many news organizations rewrote their codes of ethics during the decade. It is to the new ethics code for the *New York Times*, arguably a flagship of journalistic professionalism in the 1990s and as such certainly subject to the historic and cultural changes of the decade, that the analysis now turns.

The *New York Times* published its new code of ethics in January 20003. The focus of the lengthy document is conflict of interest, and in the first paragraph, the *Times* acknowledges that perception of is part of the issue. "The reputation of the *Times* rests upon such perceptions, and so do the professional reputations of its staff member."

The new code itself has much to recommend it. It includes both general cautions and specific examples to help with interpretation. It covers a broad variety of actual and potential relationships, some of which -- for example appearance on television or leaves of absence for book authorship -- a reasonable person would suggest apply to the *Times* more than they might to any other U.S. newspaper. The code is particularly detailed in its analysis of conflicts of interests involving family members, specifically spouses. The paper's willingness to consider spousal relationships, which will predominantly affect women considering the newspaper's current staffing, is certainly an acknowledgment of the changing role of women in the workforce and the ethical issues that this particular social change raises. The code is also forthright about the changing mores that American journalists may face when covering news in societies without a first amendment or where bribery or other forms of corruption are far more acceptable than in the U.S. In this, the *Times* code places it at the forefront of journalistic thinking about the relationship between supposedly universal ethical principles and the societal norms that govern the many cultures in which American journalists must do their jobs.

It is important to consider who specifically is meant to follow the code. The *New York Times* code itself is directed to "all the members of the news and editorial department whose work directly affects the content of the paper." Freelancers are included while other staff members, for example secretaries, are not. Also not included is management and ownership, which is crucial in the case of the *Times* since it remains, in part, a family-owned newspaper. This singular omission stands in contrast, for example, to the first American

Association of Newspaper Editors code which focused on editors and publishers and set standards for them.

The document as a whole should also be assessed. The *Times* refers to this document as a code of ethics, but as indicated earlier, the focus of the document is conflict of interest. The *Times'* code interprets conflicts of interest broadly, linking conflict of interest to perception of the newspaper's impartiality, neutrality and the integrity of its news reports. However, there are other elements that influence the integrity of the news reports -- for example accuracy and tough-minded evaluation of both sources and the information that they provide -- that are not mentioned in the code. This lack of attention to these elements of news reports is particularly striking considering the *Times* recent experience with the Won Ho Lee case, where the newspaper publicly apologized for jumping to conclusions based on reporting that failed to adequately question the motives of Congressional sources who initially leaked the erroneously damaging information. Deception is treated in very specific instances in the document, for example travel writing or restaurant and play reviewing. However, any discussion of deception as a larger method for news gathering is omitted. Again, this omission is noteworthy.

In contrast, the ethics code for the Society of Professional Journalists (Black, Barony and Stele 1997) makes accuracy and fairness the first ethical issues to receive attention and only then explores conflict of interest. Next comes a chapter on deception, and deception is defined as a news gathering technique -- not merely the concern of writers in particular sections of the paper. Simiiariy, the SPJ code devotes attention to diversity and photojournalism, which are not mentioned in the *Times* code. The SPJ code also devotes a chapter to privacy; the *Times* devotes a single sentence: "We do not inquire pointlessly into someone's personal life." The *New York Times* code also does not address the organization's responsibility to its employees--an omission that is common in ethics codes but which leaves half of the reciprocity equation essentially blank.

Thus, the new *Times* code is not as broad or as specific as that of some other news media outlets or professional news organizations. Or phrased another way, the focus on conflict of interest leads a reader to ask why so much of the *Times'* lived ethical life centers on one issue.

At one level, the need for such a focus is perfectly clear: the *Times* seeks to protect is reputation as the nation's, and perhaps the world's, preeminent news organization. The code notes that the *Times* "gathers information for the benefit of its readers." The code cautions its staff to maintain an air of "professional detachment" and requires disclosure of relationships with newsmakers who become close: "staff members who develop close relationships with people who might figure in coverage they provide...must disclose those relationships to the associate managing editor." Such disclosure, the code notes, may result in a change of assignments. All these strictures are aimed at protecting reputation and the perception of reputation--one of the enduring elements of philosophical thinking about the issue.

Also in the vein of protecting journalistic reputation, staff members are required to disclose yearly speaking fees of more than $5,000 and are forbidden from offering endorsements or testimonials except in reviews or other published columns. Doing any public relations work, paid or unpaid, generally is forbidden. Staff members may not accept gifts, tickets, discounts or other "inducements" from organizations covered by the *Times*, and payment for favorable or altered coverage is specifically forbidden. *Times* staff members are required not to invest in companies which individual staff members regularly cover or edit, and they are enjoined from speculating in the market in anticipation of news stories to be published in the *Times*. The restrictions on the staff of the financial section are more severe--they simply may not play the market and must disclose any holdings. Similarly members of the arts staff must disclose their art acquisitions once a year.

However, the code also recommends common sense. It notes that the *Times* expects to pay the expenses of its employees but that there are some times, for example military or scientific expeditions, where alternative financial arrangements may not be possible. The code provides the example of a flight aboard a corporate jet in order to obtain an interview. Staff members may do unpaid public relations work for organizations such as a child's school. Gifts and discounts available to the general public are also available to the *Times'* staff. These elements of the code, which appear in different areas of the document, thus seem to suggest that *Times* staff members can live in a community, and to some extent function as part of that community -- particularly where family and children are concerned -- and still remain in compliance with the code. Here, professional neutrality and fairness is balanced with intimate connection.

The *Times* is less willing to lets its employees become full participants in community life when the issue becomes politics. *Times* staffers may not give money to candidates or causes, march in support of public movements, or appear on radio and television voicing views that go beyond those of the paper. When a spouse of family member is involved in such activity, the staff member must disclose the conflict and possibly recuse him or herself from certain coverage. "The *Times* understands that friends and relatives of its staff have every right to pursue full and actives lives, personally and professionally. If restrictions are necessary, they fall on the *Times* employee." And, while *Times* staffers are forbidden from serving on government boards and commissions, they are allowed to help church, libraries, fine arts groups, hobby groups, etc., with "modest fund raising." All of these restrictions suggest that *Times* employees -- but not management -- must act in such as way as to maintain reader trust about the originality, neutrality and, to a lesser extent thoroughness, of the news product. Certainly, the maintenance of reader trust constitutes an important element of socially responsible journalistic behavior; historically it is a core professional value and remains so in the most recent *Times* code.

However, at a deeper level, conflict of interest as expressed in the *Times* code is clearly pointed at financial survival and even prosperity. *Times* staff members are not allowed to disclose confidential information about the operations, plans or policies of the newspaper. When approached by other journalists, staff members are obliged to funnel the question to a top editor or the paper's corporate communication department. The only exception is readers; here the code says staff members should respond "openly and honestly." Outside inquiry and criticism is thus deflected, a tactic that, were it to be adopted by the U.S. government, would be the subject of an expose rather than listed as a "best professional practice."

More pointed still is a section of the code that deals with "journalistic work outside the *Times*." Here, the code may promote a sort of ethics creep -- with *Times* staff members prohibited from doing freelance work that competes with *Times'* content while noting that the *Times* sphere of influence is larger than ever and enlarging in ways that are difficult to accurately forecast. The Web is certainly included, as are books. But the code also notes that the *Times* has begun a foray into broadcasting. Here, the code is quite specific: "Staff members may not appear on broadcasts that compete directly with The *Times's* own offerings on television or the Internet....As the paper moves further into these new fields, it direct competitors and clients or potential clients will undoubtedly grown in number." Such a inclusion requires not only that *Times* staff members have good grasp of what others (in this case their editors and their employer) will perceive as a financial conflict of interest, but they must have a good grasp on what might become a conflict of interest in the future. This is a tall order.

These sections about the economic health and financial success of the organization also point to one of the fault lines in the profession: the tension between economic goals and the traditional view of journalism as a public service. The *Times* code itself does not address this issue, even though savvy employees will certainly spot it in the document. More importantly, by including financial competition as an element of conflict of interest in its ethics code, the *Times* has placed its economic health on an equal footing with the public trust. This change in emphasis is certainly new in light of the early codes of the American Newspaper Guild and the American Society of Newspaper Editors as well as the Society for Professional Journalists' much more contemporary effort. In a theoretical sense, it is clear that the lived life of journalists must now be concerned as never before with the economic health of the parent corporation and that such concern has moral weight.

The previous analyses of the contemporary *New York Times* code as well as early twentieth century American Society of Newspaper Editors and the American Newspaper Guild codes seek to place the codes in their historic context, to note how they articulate both meaning and significance around particular issues, and to point out how such thinking can become problematic both as historic circumstances change and as the profession itself continues to mature.

The language of codes is not transparent, innocent or neutral; codes are framed by specific ideological, political, and social influences that exert preferences, pressures, and constraints. These journalism ethics codes should be seen as elements of practical communication of U.S. society that have been produced at historically specific times and under particular social, political, and economic conditions.

Reflecting an era of classical realism, in which texts are thought to represent the truth nonproblematically, the early American Newspaper Guild and the American Society for Newspaper Editor's codes were written in a straightforward manner that clearly delineated the public interest and the journalists' duty. So too, the contemporary *New York Times* code reflects the ongoing tension between economic realities and a social responsibility philosophical framework of traditional American journalistic practices. Interestingly, the authors of *Good Work* suggest that it is the tension between public expectations of socially conscious journalism, the core beliefs of the profession, and the economics of corporate conglomerates that constitutes the central challenge of contemporary journalism. While journalists as individuals may focus on public trust, history and culture caution that economic competition – when given moral weight – may have the capacity to overwhelm individual ideals.

Going beyond a definition of ethics codes as professional documentation of what constitutes good work, it is possible to see codes as efforts to "idealize" and "rationalize" specific journalistic practices. From this perspective, the normative function of codes comes into focus. Finally, it may helpful to consider Williams' notion that ironically codes suggest a more complete understanding of the relationship between journalism practices and society exists apart for the actual codes. By attempting to codify particular relationships, Williams suggests that codes may in fact actually obscure them. This study of ethics codes from different eras offers insights into the culturally and historically based contexts for these codes. But it is in the omissions, in those areas that are contested or left unsaid, that the practice of journalism may be seen to more fully emerge.

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Media Ethics

A Gang of Pecksniffs Grows Up:

The Evolution of Journalism Ethics Discourse in *The Journalist* and *Editor and Publisher*

Patrick Lee Plaisance

Assistant Professor
Colorado State University
Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
C 236A Clark Building
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
Phone: (970) 491 6484
FAX: (970) 491 2908
E-mail: patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu

A Gang of Pecksniffs Grows Up:
The Evolution of Journalism Ethics Discourse in *The Journalist* and *Editor and Publisher*

Abstract

This content analysis explores how journalism's first trade publications reflected discussion of ethical issues before and during the Progressive Era. While issues of normative behavior for reporters and editors were thought to have developed from earlier efforts to professionalize the field, this study suggests that the two areas, while intertwined, developed along different trajectories. The analysis, based on content from a random weekly sample of the earliest trade journals from 1884 to 1912, also found support for the claim that historical events that are significant in the field of journalism influence the amount of ethics-related discussion found in the early trade journals.

A Gang of Pecksniffs Grows Up:
The Evolution of Journalism Ethics Discourse in *The Journalist* and *Editor and Publisher*

The moment when William Randolph Hearst, revolver in hand, splashed through the Cuban surf to capture a group of nonresistant Spanish sailors provides the perfect image for the work known as journalism at the end of the 19th century. Having volunteered his yacht *Buccaneer* to the U.S. Navy for a war he helped bring about (Mott, 1941, p. 531), the yellow-journalist Hearst of 1898 would have scoffed at modern notions of objectivity and ethical guidelines. Serious consideration of those and other concepts was still more than two decades in the future (Schudson, 1978, p. 120). And 33 years after Hearst's infamous escapade, the state of journalism remained such that Walter Lippmann concluded, "For it is a first fact in the whole situation of modern newspapers that there does not exist any generally accepted public philosophy about them" (Lippmann, 1931, p. 434).

And yet a distinct connective tissue of history links the yellow-journalism years with the more impartial and independent American journalism that began emerging after World War I. Our contemporary notions of American journalism are rooted firmly in the recklessness and riotous excesses of Hearst's *New York Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*. Some even argue that 21st-century journalism is showing signs of coming full circle with the profit-driven merging of news and entertainment values (Christians & Traber, 1997). The Progressive Era in the first decade of the 20th century was a critical period in the development of American journalism. With the rise of the independent papers after the Civil War and the ensuing yellow-journalism wars, reporters and editors began contemplating the professionalism of the field. No longer were writers content with their public perception as hacks; journalists began evaluating themselves in comparison to other professions. The emerging emphasis on normative behavior became the foundation of journalism ethics still debated today.

Descriptive journalism history is a rich and heavily mined field of research. However, the documentation of how the philosophy of ethics evolved within American journalism remains sketchy. In her landmark study of journalism in the 19th century, Hazel Dicken-Garcia noted the dearth of media ethics research that took a historical perspective: "No literature deals to a significant degree with the history of journalism ethics" (Dicken-Garcia, 1989, p. 4). And yet the first trade journals for reporters and editors provide a glimpse of just such a history. In 1884, *The Journalist* established itself as the national forum for issues faced by journalists (Mott, p. 490; Cronin, p. 228). *Editor & Publisher* was established in 1901 and quickly became the more progressive voice of professionalization in the field. Six years later, *The Journalist* was folded into *Editor & Publisher*.

These two publications were the predominant forums of the journalism trade during the field's critical formative years before World War I and, as such, provide an important gauge of the development of ethical thought among reporters and editors. What were the changes in the amount and nature of ethics-related discussion before, during and after the Progressive Era in the industry's earliest trade journals? This study explores that research question and attempts to develop the historical perspective on media ethics that Dicken-Garcia suggests is needed. It offers an analysis of the amount of ethics-related discussion found in the two journals in relation to key historical moments that are judged to have had significant impact on the field of journalism:

- ☐ The honeymoon of newlyweds Grover Cleveland and Frances Folsom in Deer Park in 1886, where relentless press coverage prompted protests of indecency from within the ranks of journalists as well as outside the field.
- ☐ The publication of "The Right to Privacy" in 1890 by lawyers Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis, which set the course for a legally recognized right to individual privacy.
- ☐ The six-month-long Spanish-American War of 1898, which triggered serious and widespread debate among journalists over the excesses of the yellow journalism prevalent at the time.
- ☐ The denunciation of magazine "muckrakers" in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt, who coined the term. The journalistic crusading of Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens and others quickly fell off thereafter.
- ☐ 1911 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court ordering the breakup of the Standard Oil and American Tobacco trusts, which were first exposed by muckraking journalists several years earlier.

Literature review

Dynamic of history.

It is easy, and generally accurate, to conclude that American newspaper journalists in the last years of the 19th century and the first of the 20th – often paid by the inch and locked in merciless circulation wars – gave little thought to the philosophy of ethics as it might apply to their work. Still, historians have documented a clear evolution in journalistic standards and have sought to assess the relative strength of the many forces that shaped them. Public opinion, shifting social values, newspaper economics, technological advances and the emergence of journalism from its trade status after the Progressive Era all helped determine the nature of American journalism today. These were not random or accidental forces; beliefs and value systems play major roles in the development of any social system, whether they ultimately are identified or not. As Brock notes, "Human personality lies at the heart of every historical enquiry and the characteristics of the human mind must be a basic 'source' of history (1975, p. 78). The responses of America's Progressive Era journalists also were guided by definite, if embryonic, beliefs about the conduct of a free press. Even if Lippmann (1931, p. 434) was largely correct in his assessment that journalism lacked any guiding principles, an examination of the dynamic between the external forces of history and the responses of human belief systems should illuminate underlying philosophical currents that contribute to the formation of social systems.

The evolution of the philosophy of ethics must be considered central to any history of American journalism because the "standards" that were derived from normative views of press behavior played a prominent role in the growth of journalism as a social institution. We must better grasp those philosophical foundations to fully understand that evolution, which includes views of concepts such as truth, impartiality, social good, equality and press autonomy – and all of which changed over time. Basic definitions evolve over time, and each step must be accounted for: "One approach is to consider truth in the larger sense of knowledge and in the narrower definition of accuracy" (Dicken-Garcia, p. 232).

All these events and identifiable shifts in cultural trends, changing economic and political structures and new values represent a theory of press development in which an evolution of the philosophy of ethics is a critical part. Dicken-Garcia writes, "As such changes occurred, notions of the press's function and role themselves evolved, in turn shaping concepts of journalistic standards. Thus, notions of right and wrong journalistic conduct at any given time are products of dominant cultural strains" (p. 7).

Much of the journalism history that discusses ethics focuses on efforts to lend legitimacy to the field and raise journalism's status to that of a profession. Implicit in these efforts is the evolution of codes of conduct and standards of personal behavior. Clearly, the two notions of journalism ethics – professionalization and normative behavior – are intertwined, but history suggests that there were distinct developments for each. More specifically, the second grew from the first. As the status of journalism grew increasingly firmer due to technological, economic and cultural forces, more attention was paid to defining standards for everyone who called themselves a journalist. This distinction mirrored the evolution of newspapers from political organs to independent voices; as the latter developed, normative values such as objectivity were pushed to the fore: "Newspaper reporters thought that their job required an attitude of aloofness….The theory of objective reporting became a matter of professional pride among American journalists, who held that reporting the 'facts of the day' was their only duty" (Siebert et al, p. 60, 61). Christians, Ferré and Fackler distinguish between "the concern for journalism's status" and an ethics of the press concerned with "sovereign individualism" (1993, p. 32).

Cronin appears to label all ethics-related discussion found in the two early trade journals as professionalism (1993, p. 227). However, even some of the earliest issues of *The Journalist* contain examples of ethics-related content in which normative behavior, and not professionalism, appears to be the primary concern. For example, a column in the Sept. 13, 1884, issue discusses the value of the quid pro quo practice of some stage managers offering "donations" to the local press club or a particular newspaper after one of his actresses received favorable reviews. "There are people who sneer at this and say it is a bid for press support," the columnist writes. "Supposing it is, what then? Do they not all need it? But how many repay it?" (1884, p. 3). Lending legitimacy to the craft does not appear to be the point, yet content of this type foreshadowed discourse on journalistic standards and normative behavior that emerged over the following two decades.

Issues of right and wrong clearly transcend social and professional status; as Dicken-Garcia says, personal standards spring from internalized values of honor and respect as much as they do from occupational concerns. While Cronin rightly identifies the predominant movement toward professionalism of the 1880s as a reaction to the personalized journalism of the yellow era, a different conception of ethics eventually culminated in the books of educators in the 1920s:

> These writers understood the subject matter of ethics to be moral responsibility as exercised within one's professional community….They emphasized standards of right and wrong *relationships* – surely duties among colleagues, but also advertisers and publishers, and to the public. A nonfunctional approach dominated, in which passion for righteousness, duty, communal welfare, trust, decency and honesty of purpose was a common exhortation signaling a deep

> connection with others....Professional behavior was considered morally appropriate to the degree that it enhanced mutually appreciative understanding and promoted joint control and influence (Christians et al, p. 33).

This moral component of journalism, consequently, can be distinguished from the earlier emphasis on legitimacy. The evolution of both, subjected to the various historical forces outlined here, subsequently reshaped future objectives of journalists into what we conceive of as journalism ethics today. By examining the relationship between several historical moments of the era and the amount of both types of ethics-related content in the prominent trade journals, this study seeks to examine how those events helped shape that evolution of ethics within American journalism.

1886: The presidential newlyweds. After two years in the White House, Grover Cleveland married 21-year-old Frances Folsom, the daughter of a law partner. He remains the only president who married while in office. But coverage of the newlyweds raised serious questions about the practice of journalists. The incident that heightened concerns for privacy more than most was the couple's honeymoon trip to Deer Park, Md., in 1886. Reporters stalked the newlyweds and loitered overnight in the shrubbery outside their cottage. *The Journalist* later called it "an impertinent intrusion into private life without parallel in the history of journalism" (Mott, 1941, p. 511). Indeed, in its June 1886 issue, the trade journal castigated its membership:

> Editors who are personally gentlemen, and who would resent the imputation of meddling in other people's business, have plunged into this matter pellmell, and have been eminently successful in divesting themselves and their papers of every semblance of dignity; and in the process must have given their self-respect some pretty hard rubs. They have certainly succeeded in gaining the

hearty contempt of all thinking readers (p. 8).

1890: Warren and Brandeis on Privacy. The Warren-Brandeis article setting out the argument for a right to privacy "did nothing less than add a chapter to the law" (Ernst & Schwartz, 1962, p. 46). "Of the desirability – indeed of the necessity – of some such protection, there can, it is believed, be no doubt," Warren and Brandeis wrote. "The press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and of decency" (p. 196). A year after its publication, the new privacy principle was tested in a New York court and affirmed. In 1893, a judge ruled against a newspaper's use of a photograph based on the Warren-Brandeis article (Ernst & Schwartz, 1962, p. 71-74).

The landmark paper on privacy represented a culmination of several events and developments involving journalists. The practice among reporters of "interviewing" subjects, both willing and unwilling, had become widespread and controversial. Also, the rapid technological advances in photography lent a new sense of urgency to the issue of maintaining one's privacy. No longer did a photograph require a planned, extended "sitting" by the subjects. "Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life; and numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that 'what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops,' " Warren and Brandeis wrote (1890, p. 195).

1898: The Spanish-American War. Historians have debated the measure of influence that the prominent yellow journalists of the 1880s exerted on events that led to the six-month-long war with Spain. But many echo Mott in his belief that New York publishers Hearst and Pulitzer played a crucial role in bringing it about:

> "...There seems to be great probability in the frequently reiterated statement that if Hearst had not challenged Pulitzer to a circulation contest at the time of the Cuban insurrection, there would have been no Spanish-American War. Certainly the most powerful and persistent jingo propaganda ever carried on by newspapers was led by the New York *Journal* and *World* in 1896-98, and the result was an irresistible popular fervor for war which at length overcame the long unwillingness of President McKinley and even swept blindly over the last-minute capitulation by Spain on all points at issue" (Mott, 1941, p. 527).

While Hearst and Pulitzer profited substantially from the fervor they whipped up over the mysterious explosion of the USS Maine, a chorus of journalists voiced despair over the tactics. Indeed, the war can be considered a turning point in the nature of the discussion of journalistic practices in the field. Beforehand, most debate was focused on issues of professionalization and legitimacy. The war, however, moved the debate further into the arena of normative behavior for reporters. The concern already had surfaced years before in the Deer Park incident and others, but the war brought it to the fore. In May 1989, *The Journalist* observed, "We gave the Spaniards no use for spies, for our yellow journalists became themselves the spies of Spain" (Mott, 1941, p. 536). Many agreed: "Nothing so disgraceful as the behaviors of two of these newspapers the last week has been known in the history of American journalism," wrote E.L. Godkin, one of New York City's most respected editors. "It is a crying shame that men should work such mischief in order to sell more newspapers" (Mott, 1941, p. 352).

1906: Roosevelt denounces the muckrakers. Soon after the new century began, *McClure's*, *Collier's* and other magazines featured hard-hitting and often bombastic investigative pieces written by journalists who had no use for the concept of impartiality.

Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens and others like them took up their own form of the newspaper "crusades" against urban greed and corruption of the 1880s and 1890s. They saw themselves as crusaders for the common American worker, whom they felt was being ruthlessly exploited by unrestrained capitalism. Tarbell's landmark "History of the Standard Oil Company" shed light on the workings of the Rockefeller empire, which later fell victim to Theodore Roosevelt's trust-busting efforts.

After a few years, however, the magazine crusades began to decline when the public appeared to grow weary of their lack of restraint (Mott, 1941, p. 575). By 1911, *Collier's* even published an essay by the *New York Times* business manager deriding them as "a commercial trade" (Mott, p. 575). Roosevelt signaled the turning tide of public sentiment in 1906 when he coined the unflattering term "muckraker" to describe the pen-wielding crusaders. Roosevelt took his image from the Man with the Muck-rake in *Pilgrim's Progress*: the hard-headed peasant who disregarded the heavenly crown offered to him because he was too engrossed by the filth on the floor.

1911: The breakup of Standard Oil and American Tobacco. The evolution of the suits against Standard Oil between 1890 and 1911 was primarily dependent on "legal technicality, political maneuver, and press manipulation" (Bringhurst, 1979, p. 8). The enormous success of the Standard Oil Trust, in which John D. Rockefeller kept his 1882 consolidation agreements secret for six years, was unprecedented in American history and was unaffected by the Sherman Antitrust Law when alarmed politicians passed it in 1890 (Boorstin, 1973, p. 419). Antipathy toward aggressive monopolistic practices ran deep; reformers pushed antitrust bills in every state legislature in the 1880s, and 13 states passed their own antitrust measures between March 1889 and July 1890 (Bringhurst, 1979, p. 3). But policy was to be determined on the federal level, and trustbusting prosecutors under President William Howard Taft pressed their case in the St. Louis circuit court in April 1909. Judges there unanimously ruled that the Standard Oil combination had violated two key provisions of the Sherman Act, and the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, which heard arguments in January 1911. The justices' decision was handed down in May.

While the weak court remedies allowed the Standard companies to operate as a closely coordinated unit for 15 years after the decree, the Supreme Court ruling stood as a culmination of the national debate begun by Henry D. Lloyd and Ida Tarbell with their portrayal Standard Oil as "the embodiment of malevolent monopoly" (Bringhurst, 1979, pp. 205, 206). Prominent writers and journalists began fanning public hostility toward monopolistic practices in 1890s, when Lloyd depicted Standard Oil as a serious threat to American society in his *Wealth Against Commonwealth*. But it was Tarbell who led the public crusade. Her series in *McClure's* magazine, "The history of the Standard Oil Company," ran from 1902 to 1904 and "enflamed the public's longstanding hostility toward the combination as nothing before had" (Bringhurst, 1979, p. 69).

Shaping journalism ethics.

Much of contemporary media ethics debate remains contingent upon, and thus limited to, explicitly 20th-century definitions of conduct and values (Merrill, 1990; Christians, Ferré & Fackler, 1991). Indeed, few researchers have sought to trace the roots of ethics-related theories back beyond the sober modernism ushered by World War I.

"…Perhaps no topic has ever been so prevalent in journalism as has ethics during the past decade," Dicken-Garcia writes. "But the absence from the debate about media ethics of a historical perspective – that is, reference to the past to inform, direct, and give continuity to the discussions and the purposes they serve – is conspicuous and limiting" (Dicken-Garcia, p. 4).

Dicken-Garcia makes the important distinction between ethical values and professional standards. The latter are the time-specific ideas and concepts that, on a practical basis, are used to guide daily conduct. And yet, she concludes that "historical analysis of journalistic standards also point up the degree to which discussion of journalistic ethics proceeds from theories" (Dicken-Garcia, p. 234). In fact, while she states that "press critics throughout the nineteenth century did not apply the philosophical concepts of ethics to journalism" (p. 10), some prominent voices have claimed that the philosophy of ethics was at work in the field of turn-of-the-century journalism nonetheless. Fred Siebert argued that the predominant market-oriented journalism of the period was guided by a "libertarian" philosophy of the press, the excesses of which triggered widespread calls for moves toward professionalization during the first half of the twentieth century. Those calls resulted in the proliferation of journalism schools and rudimentary codes of conduct for newspapers (Siebert, 1956). A quarter-century earlier, Walter Lippmann argued that philosophy played no part in the functioning of the press, yet he also strongly suggested the press, even in its slavish pursuit of gossip and scandal, was following a Millian utilitarianism: "…The popular commercial press of the second half of the nineteenth century down to our own times has had as its central motive the immediate satisfaction of the largest number of people" (Lippmann, 1931, p. 436).

Clearly, theoretical underpinnings existed even during journalism's most ignoble era. Journalism ethics, while severely obscured by the sensationalist clutter of the times, certainly had a pulse, and perhaps the strongest indication of this lies in the wry humor of H.L. Mencken. In 1914, Mencken likened the morality of journalism to the trial lawyer who must adjust his manner to the level of the jury: "Neither may like the job, but both must face it to gain a larger end….The art of leading the vulgar, in itself, does no discredit to its practitioner" (Mencken, 1914, p. 296). The Baltimore icon concluded that journalism clearly had witnessed the evolution of an ethics, however erratic:

> The way of ethical progress is not straight. It describes, to risk a mathematical pun, a sort of drunken hyperbola. But if we thus move onward and upward by leaps and bounces, it is certainly better than not moving at all. Each time, perhaps, we slip back, but each time we stop at a higher level (p. 297).

The libertarianism that Siebert and others refer to emerged from the decline of the "party press" system. But the increasing financial power of the growing metro papers – subsidized by the widely condemned yellow-journalism practices of the time – also affected their behavior. The Progressive Era also ushered the end of "personal journalism" – papers dominated by a single powerful editor who managed every aspect. Mott cites one prominent New York writer who commented, "Large capital in newspapers and their heightened earning power tended to steady them." Mott continued: "…the soundly financed and well-established journal was in a far better position to resent undue interference with proper journalistic functions than the insecure sheet of an earlier day" (Mott, 1941, p. 548). Thus, financial security resulted in heightened awareness of the need for journalistic autonomy. The Progressive Era reforms in the realm of politics and labor relations also helped reshape reporters' conceptions of themselves: They saw themselves as "scientists uncovering the economic and political facts of industrial life more boldly, more clearly, and more 'realistically' than anyone had done before" (Schudson, 1978, p. 71).

Schudson notes that the priority placed on simply telling a good story was slow to evolve into a belief in the primacy of facts; "…into the first decade of the twentieth century, even at *The New York Times*, it was uncommon for journalists to see a sharp divide between facts and values" (Schudson, 1978, p. 5). But from the 1920s on, with the disintegration of Victorian Europe and the horrors of World War I, a new skepticism and disillusionment guided social thought. The emergence of the notion of objectivity as a guiding journalistic principle corresponds with this modernist disillusionment: facts cannot be trusted because they can always be used for propaganda and individual agendas. Objectivity became part of a moral philosophy, "a declaration of what kind of thinking one should engage in, in making moral decisions" (Schudson, 1978, p. 8). Objectivity, then, was taken up as a bulwark against manipulation and partisanship that characterized much of the previous journalism.

As a community of laborers, the field of journalism developed first from a trade to an occupation that sought the status of a profession. Journalists emerging from the yellow-journalism era were preoccupied with the acquisition of legitimacy and respectability, which was reflected in the "bolting" of newspapers from political parties. It was only toward the end of the era that most journalists began to contemplate the *effects* of their behavior and of newspaper content. The progression from this pursuit of legitimacy to a broader concern for normative values provides a foundation for the theories of journalism ethics that are debated today. Conversely, the shift of focus from legitimacy to normative behavior during the Progressive Era also was largely determined by the social and cultural issues raised by historical events.

A content analysis of the ethics-related discussion in trade journals of the era should reveal that progression from concern for legitimacy to concern for behavioral effects because that same shift also is reflected in some of the major historical, journalism-related events of the time. With the proliferation of cheap newspapers before World War I, the concern over normative journalistic values not only was likely to dominate the discussion, but the volume of the content undoubtedly increased as the field's published forum gained a broader and more galvanized audience.

The link between those external historical forces and the development of the two threads of journalism ethics forms the basis of this study's hypotheses:

- H1: The more content that focuses on concerns of professional legitimacy in the trade journals, the less content there will be that focuses on issues of normative behavior and values.
- H2: The amount of ethics-related content will increase shortly after each of the historical events identified as significant in the history of journalism.

Method

A content analysis of a random stratified sampling of 320 weekly issues of *The Journalist* and *Editor & Publisher* was conducted to quantify the ethics-related debate in the field during the reign of yellow journalism and through the Progressive Era. Both weekly journals were used because *The Journalist*, which began publication in March 1884, reverted to a monthly publication cycle after August 1906 and was folded into

Editor & Publisher the following year. Therefore, to take advantage of the continuity that publication of both offers and to ensure uniformity, the study is based on stratified samplings of *The Journalist* from March 1884 to 1901, and of *Editor and Publisher*, when it began publishing that year, to December 1912. Included in this time period, however, is a gap from April 1895 to April 1897, when *The Journalist* suspended publication.

Since the intent of this study is to analyze changes in the amount and nature of ethics-related content over a specified period of time, the weekly issues of both publications that were randomly selected for each month between April 1884 and December 1912 inclusive represent the units of analysis. Following research that has suggested the efficiency of sampling weekly publications on a monthly stratification (Lacy, Robinson & Riffe, 1995), this study randomly selected one publication per month beginning with issues published in April 1884.

Editorial content for each of the selected publications was measured in column inches. Advertising content, illustrations and drawings were excluded. Examination of each article identified those that addressed ethics-related issues or topics. For example, much editorial content of the early issues of *The Journalist* was devoted to denouncing the practice of paying reporters according to how much they wrote instead of putting them on salaries. Occasional articles in *The Journalist* also urged newspapers to sever their ties to political parties; these address the issue of journalistic independence and were coded as ethics-related content.

This coding process enabled the study to quantify the proportion of editorial content within the issues sampled that addressed ethical concerns. It also allowed a detailed time-line comparison between the occurrence and volume of ethics-related content and the five identified historical, press-related events of the Progressive Era.

The ethics-related material then was further categorized: that which was concerned with issues of journalism legitimacy and professionalization, and content that dealt with normative behavioral values. The first category represents broad, generalized discussions on reporting as an occupation and on journalism as a field. The latter represents commentary on what values should guide journalists' behavior as well as attempts to distinguish "good" and "bad" journalism. For example, articles that advocated political independence of newspapers fall in the legitimacy category. Conversely, an occasional column headlined "Hints for Journalists," which sarcastically suggested that reporters practice such brutish behaviors as tracking mud into a gentleman's parlor, belongs in the normative behavior category. The numerous personal, politically-tinged attacks that editors of *The Journalist* made on various editors, including Albion Tourgeé and Pulitzer, were not classified as ethics-related since the majority of them appeared to be personal in nature rather than professional. For example, anti-Semitic attacks referring to Joseph Pulitzer as "Jewseph Pulitzer" in early issues of *The Journalist* reflect the social motivations of individual trade journal editors and not issues of journalism.

After quantifying the amount of ethics-related debate in each issue, this study then analyzed changes in the amount of such debate over time as well as shifts in the substantive nature of the content. The correlation between the percentage of "professional legitimacy" content and "normative behavior" content was examined, as well as the patterns of predominance for each over time. The selected issues, the study's unit of analysis, were numbered sequentially from one to 320. The means of the amount of each type of ethics-related content in each of the months examined provided categorical levels of measurement. An analysis of variance was conducted to determine the statistical significance of the differences among the averages of the two types of ethics-related debate over the time periods studied. The monthly units were then clustered together (T_1, T_2, T_3, etc.) and divided into periods of time to examine the relationship of average amounts of each type of ethics-related content before and after each historical event.

Results

Coding of the sample of 1893 issues of *The Journalist* revealed that less than 4.5 percent of the editorial content was ethics-related. This was not unusual for the overall sample. The years with the largest amount of ethics-related content were 1898 and 1910, with more than 9 percent. A coder reliability test for assessing what constituted ethical content and what did not achieved a Scott's pi of .80.

Media ethics literature suggests that the two types of ethical concerns – professional legitimacy and normative values – evolved in relation to but independent of each other. Coder reliability for distinguishing the two types achieved a Scott's pi of .98. Results of the study indicated no support for the claim that a decline in the former would be mirrored by an increase in the latter (H1). In fact, while professionalism claimed a slightly larger percentage of content (Figure 1), results challenge the perception that professional legitimacy was the overriding concern in the profession's early years. Content of *The Journalist* addressed issues of normative values as much or more than it did professionalism during its first years (Figs. 1 & 2). As expected, discussion of ethical issues in journalism constituted a fraction of the content found in both *The Journalist* and *Editor & Publisher* during the first years of the publication of each (Table 1).

As the first trade journal for the burgeoning field, *The Journalist* acted largely as a bulletin board for new appointments and the births and deaths of papers across the country. Editors also commented extensively on the merits of the various New York newspapers and on the treatment of reporters who worked at each. Many of the pages also were filled with press-club minutes and other minutiae. An occasional column weighed in on the pros and cons of standards and practices of the day. *Editor & Publisher* focused largely on the business side of the industry, regularly devoting large amounts of space to circulation and advertising strategy in its early years. Conventions of ad men were covered as eagerly as those of newspaper publishers. But its business slant did not prevent it from continuing to serve as the organ of press club news and who's who updates from around the country.

The years covered by the study were grouped into periods according to several identified historical events: the 1886 honeymoon of President Grover Cleveland and Frances Folsom; the 1890 Warren-Brandeis paper on privacy; the Spanish-American War in 1898; President Theodore Roosevelt's denunciation of the "muckrakers" in 1906, and the Supreme Court decision ordering the breakup of the Standard Oil and American Tobacco trusts in 1911. The amount of the different types of ethics-related content was then examined for each period.

A series of independent samples *t*-tests on the means of ethics-related content in between each of the historical events revealed that the differences in the amounts before and after the President Cleveland's 1886 honeymoon and before and after publication of the Warren-Brandeis privacy paper are statistically significant ($p < .05$) (Table 2). This suggests moderate support for the claim that ethics-related commentary in the trade journals did respond to historical events (H1), though no statistical significance was revealed for the same content at the time of the other events listed.

An analysis of variance among the content totals between each historical period using the Bonferroni test revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) in the changes in amounts of legitimacy content after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and after the 1911 Supreme Court ruling on the Standard Oil antitrust case. Content that addressed issues of professional legitimacy hit a low point in the period after the Spanish-American War and then significantly increased through the aftermath of Roosevelt's trust-busting efforts (Table 3). The ANOVA also revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in the changes in the amounts of normative-behavior content in the period after publication of the Warren-Brandeis privacy paper and the period after the Spanish-American War. The amount of normative content was relatively high before the outbreak of the war before dropping sharply after the sinking of the USS Maine.

Since ethics-related commentary constituted a relatively small percentage of the journals' content, single columns devoted to the topic could dramatically affect the proportions. For example, much of the dramatic increase in professional legitimacy content found in *The Journalist* after 1887 resulted from a large number of columns pushing newspaper editors to put reporters on salary instead of paying by the column inch (Figure 2). Similarly, the spike in both types of ethics-related content that occurred in 1910 (Figs. 1 & 2) stemmed from several single, seemingly coincidental columns that ran in *Editor and Publisher*. The Feb. 12 issue reprinted a lecture by a Manhattan

Presbyterian pastor headlined, "The power of the press – noted New York divine asks: 'Is it dwindling?'" (p. 4). One month later, the March 12 issue featured two pieces challenging a magazine article that accused American metro dailies of suppressing critical business news to protect profits ("Suppressing the news," p. 6; "Press muckraked," p. 8).

Discussion

This study raises questions about the common supposition that concern over journalism ethics before the turn of the century was principally focused on issues of professionalism and legitimacy. Ethics-related content in the early issues of *The Journalist* and *Editor & Publisher* reflect both the raucousness of the era and the slow but steady maturation of the industry. The same issue of *The Journalist* that carried vicious, personal attacks on "Jewseph Pulitzer" also ran lofty columns that extolled the ever-increasing power of the press to bring about social good and the journalistic responsibility to tell the truth. *Editor & Publisher* recounted, without a hint of disapproval, how one western reporter persuaded a sheriff to move up an execution to better suit his paper's deadline. In the next issue, however, it provided thoughtful analysis of the role of press agents and the importance of keeping the business side of a newspaper "downstairs" and the editorial operations "upstairs."

Clearly, both journals were designed to foster a sense of brotherhood among working journalists; in that sense, their very existence embodied the ethical concern of creating a professional space in society for newspaper men and women. Yet discussion of normative values, while it may have been a natural extension of the professionalism movement, seems to have had a life of its own in the trade press. Even in its infancy, American journalistic ethics was not a zero-sum game in which professionalism yielded to talk of guiding principles of behavior.

The Journalist represents the embryonic stages of ethical thought in American journalism; when it sporadically turned its editorial attention to issues of journalism conduct, it was as concerned about the behavior of individual journalists as it was about the behavior of newspapers in general. The two appeared intricately linked, given journalism's roots in the "personal journalism" defined by the supervision of Charles Dana, James Gordon Bennett, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. The professional *was* the personal during this time.

The significant fluctuation in the amount of ethics-related content before and after President Cleveland's honeymoon as well as the publication of the landmark paper on privacy suggests that trade-journal content could be used as a barometer of the attention on ethical issues. Since no other pattern in the content emerged around the other historical events, however, the effects of events on ethics discussion suggests the need for further analysis. While the results of the study refute the common perception that professionalism was the preoccupying concern of journalism ethics in the early trade journals, they do not clarify the relationship between the development of the two issues. Outwardly, the particular historical events referred to in this study did not appear to drive ethical content in the trade journals. In fact, the content did not appear to be tied to any particular event, except for isolated discussions of the Cleveland honeymoon and the antitrust cases, and general references to the issue of privacy. Further study incorporating more detailed analyses of additional historical sources is needed to establish what kind of relationship exists between the amount of ethical content and other historical developments, such as the increasing reliance upon wire services.

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Appendix

Instructions for coding of content

(1) Read all editorial content and identify the subject of each article or column. Mark all articles that present questions or pose arguments on ethical issues relating to journalism. An article or column shall be identified as containing ethics-related content if it addresses such topics as how and why should editors or reporters be considered professionals, how should journalists handle and manage what is deemed news in a way that ensures their credibility, or how journalists should present themselves or behave in public. Articles that explore or argue for or against distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable journalistic behavior are considered ethics-related, as are pieces that castigate or praise newspapers or individual reporters or editors for their conduct regarding certain stories or cases. Articles that present personal or political arguments or attacks on individuals, and that only peripherally address journalistic issues, are not to be identified as ethics-related content. For example, an article in The Journalist that offers personal criticism of Joseph Pulitzer using anti-semitic language (referring to him as "Jewseph" Pulitzer), is not to be considered ethics-related, but reflects the political and social motivations of certain trade-journal editors and not actual issues of journalism.

(2) Using a ruler, measure the column inches of all editorial material. Do not measure illustrations or advertisements. Also record how much of the total has been identified as ethics-related content.

(3) Review all content marked as ethics-related and further categorize each article or column into one of two types: content that addresses issues of professionalization and legitimacy, and content that addresses issues of normative behavioral values. Each shall be color-coded according to category. Articles that offer broad, generalized discussions on reporting as an occupation and on journalism as a field shall be labeled as being in the professional legitimacy category. This would include ethics-related discussions mentioned above that address the present or future role of journalism in society or the institutionalization of the field. Content also shall be labeled as being in this category if it explores the distinction between the perceptions of journalists as legitimate custodians of the news and as clerical "hacks." Content shall be labeled as being in the category of normative behavior if it offers commentary on what values should guide journalists' behavior as well as attempts to distinguish "good" and "bad" journalism. Unlike the professional legitimacy category, this type of content may often focus on individual reporters or editors as examplars of "professional" journalists or as scoundrels whose behavior reflects poorly upon the field.

(4) Using a ruler, measure the amount, in column inches, of each type of ethics-related content.

(5) Using a coding sheet, record the total inches of content in each issue and the total inches of each type of ethics-related content for each issue. Calculate the percentages for each type of ethics-related content for each issue.

Figure 1. Percentages of professional legitimacy and normative behavior content.

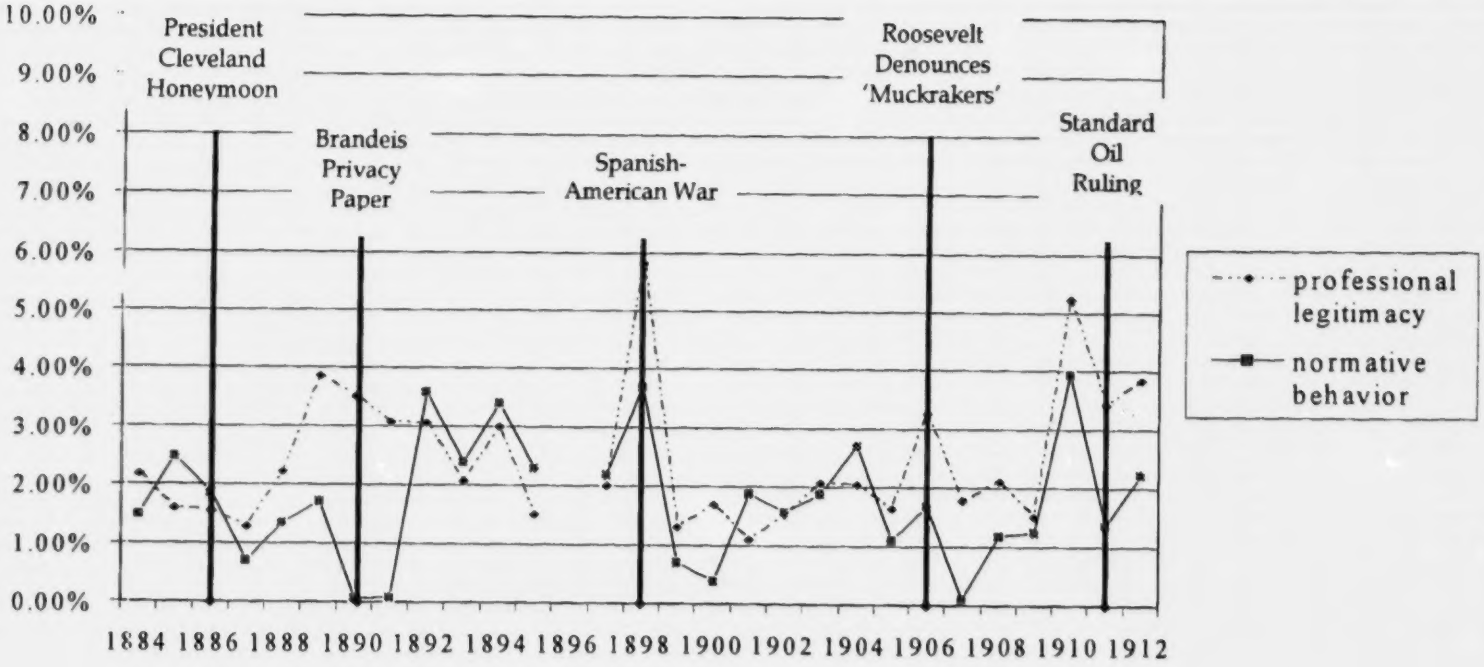

Figure 2. Column inches of professional legitimacy and normative behavior content in trade journals by year.

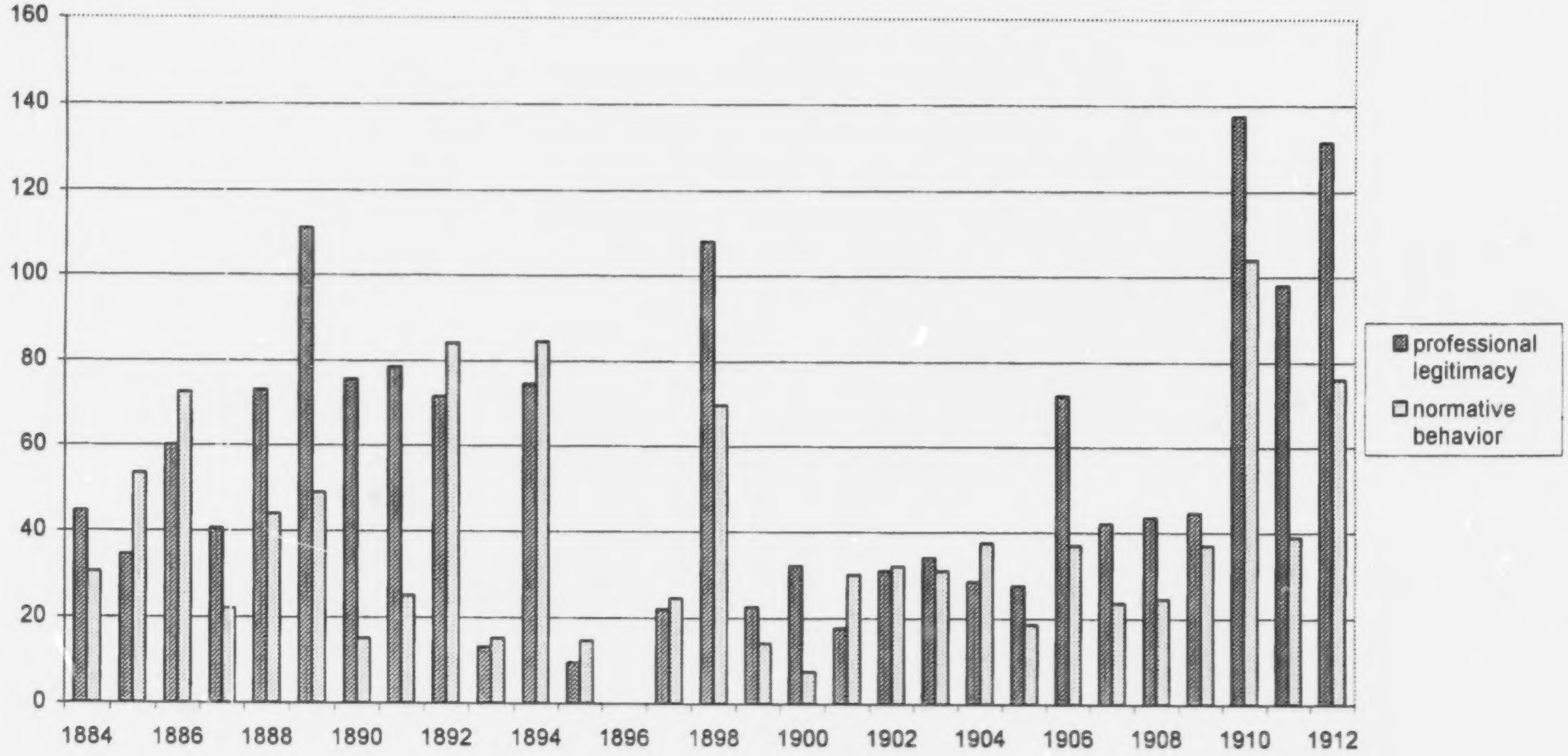

Figure 1. Percentage of professional legitimacy and normative behavior content in trade journals by year

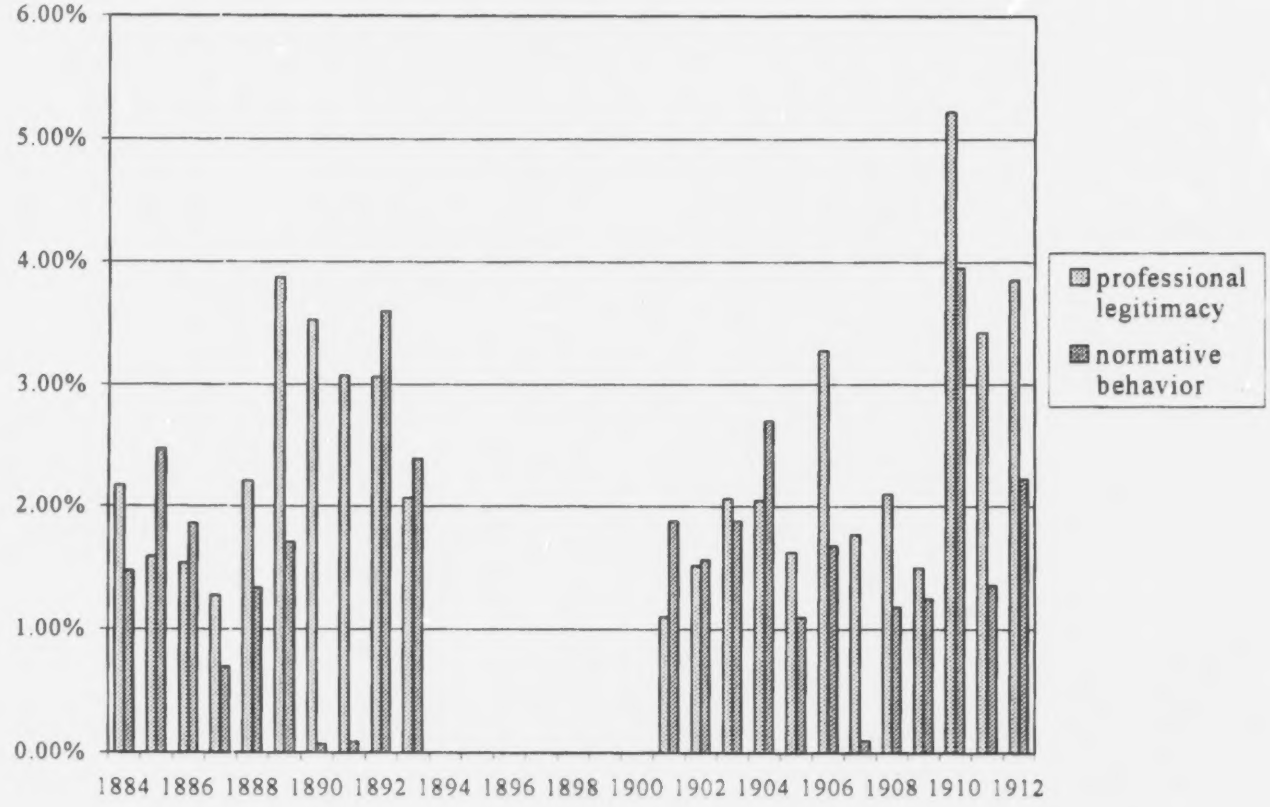

Table 1. Percentages of professional legitimacy and normative behavior content in trade journals.

Variables	Percentage
Professional legitimacy	1309.5 Inches 2.52 %
Normative behavior	900.5 Inches 1.73 %

Table 2. a) Independent t-tests for ethics-related content before and after 1886 honeymoon of President Cleveland and Frances Folsom.

	Before	**After**			
Variables	Means (SD)	Means (SD)	t value	df	significance
Legitimacy content	3.5 (3.9) N=26	6.4 (5.9) N=49	-2.23	73	$p < .05$
Normative content	3.7 (3.7) N=26	3.6 (3.8) N=49	.07	73	ns

b) Independent t-tests for ethics-related content before and after 1890 Warren-Brandeis paper on the right to privacy.

Variables	Means (SD)	Means (SD)	t value	df	significance
Legitimacy content	6.3 (5.8) N=48	5.8 (9.3) N=49	.31	95	ns
Normative content	2.9 (2.8) N=48	4.9 (5.2) N=49	-2.42	74.9	$p < .05$

c) Independent t-tests for ethics-related content before and after 1898 explosion of USS Maine, which touched off the Spanish-American War.

Variables	Means (SD)	Means (SD)	t value	df	significance
Legitimacy content	3.5 (5.4) N=48	5.7 (10.3) N=24	-.98	29.55	ns
Normative content	2.6 (3.7) N=48	4.4 (5.5) N=24	-1.45	34	ns

d) Independent t-tests for ethics-related content before and after 1906 denunciation of muckrakers by President Roosevelt.

Variables	Means (SD)	Means (SD)	t value	df	significance
Legitimacy content	2.9 (4.1) N=49	4.6 (5.9) N=48	-1.58	82.71	ns
Normative content	2.4 (3.2) N=49	3.8 (5.5) N=48	-1.49	95	ns

(cont'd)

Table 2 (cont'd). e) Independent t-tests for ethics-related content before and after 1911 Supreme Court order that the Standard Oil Trust be broken.

Variables	Means (SD)	Means (SD)	t value	df	significance
Legitimacy content	6.0 (7.2) N=49	9.7 (10.2) N=19	-1.71	66	ns
Normative content	3.9 (5.5) N=49	5.5 (4.0) N=19	-1.12	66	ns

Table 3. One-way analysis of variance of ethics-related content (in inches) by time periods.

Variables	Time Periods June 1886 to Nov. 1890 Mean (SD)	Dec. 1890 to Feb. 1898 Mean (SD)	Mar. 1898 to Mar. 1906 Mean (SD)	Apr. 1906 to May 1911 Mean (SD)	June 1911 to Dec. 1912 Mean (SD)	F	df	sig.
Professional legitimacy	6.3 (5.8)	5.5 (9.1)	3.2[a] (4.8)	5.7 (7.2)	9.7[a] (10.2)	.0012	5	$p < .01$
Normative behavior	3.5 (3.7)	4.6[b] (5.3)	2.5[b] (3.4)	3.8 (5.1)	5.5 (4.0)	.02	5	$p < .05$

[a] Difference between 1898-1906 period (post Spanish-American War) and 1911-1912 period (post-Standard Oil ruling) is significant.

[b] Difference between 1890-1898 period (post privacy paper) and 1898-1906 period (post Spanish-American War) is significant.

Media Ethics

Questions of Judgment in the Newsroom:

A Journalistic Instrumental-Value Theory for Media Ethics

Patrick Lee Plaisance

Assistant Professor
Colorado State University
Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
C 236A Clark Building
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
Phone: (970) 491 6484
FAX: (970) 491 2908
E-mail: patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu

Questions of Judgment in the Newsroom:
A Journalistic Instrumental-Value Theory for Media Ethics

Abstract

Current media ethics theorizing remains preoccupied with building competing normative philosophical frameworks, yet does not often focus on the construction and operation of human value systems – which arguably are the engines that drive most ethical deliberations. This study uses social psychology research on value systems to construct a profile of journalistic values using a modified version of the Rokeach Value Survey. A nationwide probability-sample survey of 600 newspaper journalists produced a response rate of 59 percent (N = 355). Survey results, together with a series of in-depth interviews, suggest that 1) journalists may have an inadequate conceptualization of journalistic autonomy; 2) the field suffers from an excessively wide range to which journalists embrace the goal of transparent deliberation; and 3) the journalistic mission to "minimize harm" requires clarification within the profession.

Questions of Judgment in the Newsroom:

A Journalistic Instrumental-Value Theory for Media Ethics

The controversial forces shaping contemporary journalism have drawn enormous attention from media theorists, practitioners and outside observers (Goldberg, 2001; Kuypers, 2002; Alterman, 2003). Indeed, several critics have argued that journalism is "in crisis" and that the fate of the profession depends on the outcome of the struggle between its traditional core principles and the trend of corporatization (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). "[T]his is a pivotal moment in which the scales are hanging in the balance," according to one recent book. "We do not know whether quality journalism or schlock sensationalism will prevail" (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon, 2001, p. 152). The profession appears to be at an ethical crossroads; a disturbing 63 percent of journalists recently interviewed perceived a decline in values and ethics within their field (Gardner et al., p. 128). The last two books mentioned dwell extensively on the role of values in guiding the work of journalists; indeed, in their protocol used to interview journalists, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and Damon were interested, as this study is, in exploring the values, standards and beliefs that journalists say inform their work (p. 259-262). Obviously, many different forces will continue to shape the journalism that we see – forces of technology, economics and corporate ownership, of cultural norms and the diverse demands of various audiences. But the values embraced by the profession also will help determine what kind of journalism will "prevail" in the future. It is more critical than ever to have a precise understanding of the values claimed by journalists.

Literature Review

The media ethics literature is filled both with calls to more clearly define the values that govern media practitioners and with claims about which values ought to drive good journalism. A large number of media ethicists have responded by trying to document the ethical policies of journalists (Black, Barney & Van Tubergen, 1979; Singletary, Caudill, Caudill & White, 1990; White & Pearce, 1991; Voakes, 1997) or promoting broad, normative frameworks for ethical behavior (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1987; Merrill, 1990; Lambeth, 1992; Christians, Ferré & Fackler, 1993). But the public-perception gap and low morale in the field suggest the need for an examination of more fundamental philosophical processes underlying such recurring questions as at what point does a reporter begin intruding on a subject's privacy and how to handle sources insisting on anonymity. The values that we hold, or the philosophical principles on which we base our reasons for doing things – claims to truth, social justice, fairness – constitute the engine that drives discussions of ethics. Michael Stocker and other philosophers refer to the challenges and implications of multiple human values: "[P]lural values are the rule rather than the exception … [and] many, if not most, ordinary choices involve plural values; and thus…if plurality engenders problems of judgment, then even our ordinary life at its most ordinary is, contrary to appearances, problematic" (p. 178).

The problem of applying competing or conflicting values continues to intrigue media ethicists. "Journalists frequently lay claim to broad principles, such as a commitment to truth. Yet they offer little insight into how to move from that principle to practice, such as deciding whether absolute accuracy or clear meaning (through editing) is more important to the 'truth' of quotations" (Boeyink, 1992, p. 110). There is little question over whether ethical frameworks are used in journalistic decision-making. The most substantive discussions revolve around the factors that influence that process (Shoemaker, 1997; Voakes, 1997) or the philosophical underpinnings of a democratic free press (Kidder, 1995; Merrill, 1997; Christians & Traber, 1997). Others have sought to explore the journalistic applications of particular philosophical applications (Baker, 1997; Cunningham, 1999). Much of the media ethics literature seeks to weigh broad, philosophical approaches against each other in the search for a normative system, often concluding with compelling but vague calls for "pluralistic" thinking (Lambeth, 1992; Christians, Ferré & Fackler, 1993). However, few can be considered mutually exclusive, and many share fundamental philosophical principles or values, such as autonomy or universality or social welfare.

Yet virtually nowhere in the field has social psychology research into the nature of values been brought to bear on this discussion. The proposed journalistic instrumental-value theory argues that the conventional applications of philosophical approaches in media ethics research are not comprehensive enough to explain – and therefore predict – journalistic behavior. Rather, social psychology research suggests that media practitioners operate by constantly reassessing the primacy and relevancy of each within a set of fixed, so-called instrumental values as they are applied to diverse ethical questions.

Issues of media ethics subsume questions of fact into the search for appropriate responses and policies that are value-based. Rokeach's definition of value has informed much contemporary value analysis: "More formally, to say that a person 'has a value' is to say that he has an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or that a particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (1968, p. 550). Values, research suggests, are relatively stable over time for members within a given group.

Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) argued that the media maintain cultural consensus by reaffirming norms. Nearly two decades later, Breed (1964) elaborated on the complexity of the dynamic of media socialization involving values (p. 187). As Voakes said, the common denominator for all philosophical approaches is the concept of values, which are important in describing one's moral orientation (1997, p. 20). Elliott argued that our moral development depends upon an "assumption of universality" of shared values (1997, p. 69). Lambeth proposes a system of moral reasoning based on the weighing of five principles he has derived from philosophical ideals, codes of ethics and practices among journalists. In these and other instances, researchers have sought to boil down of philosophical writings to a refined series of guidelines for journalism ethics.

Linking media ethics and value theory research.

Research into values has an extensive history in sociology and social psychology and has culminated in a body of theory that suggests individuals conduct their social lives according to a "value system" – "a hierarchical arrangement of values, a rank-ordering of values along a continuum of importance" (Rokeach, 1968, p. 551). Research also has produced sophisticated assessment instruments used in value analysis, most notably the Rokeach Value Survey that has been widely used since the early 1970s. The Rokeach Value Survey, which assesses the respondent's rank-ordering of 18 values in two distinct categories, has been independently validated and used extensively to compare the value systems of individuals as well as diverse cultures. Values, research also suggests, are relatively stable over time for members in a given group.

Using the Rokeach Value Survey, researchers have examined the influence of values on television viewing behavior (Becker & Conner, 1981; McCarty & Shrum, 1993), the value systems of city planners and managers (Edwards & Galloway, 1981), and how values guide the ideological outlooks of social workers (Koeske & Crouse, 1981). The value survey also has been used to examine how specific instrumental values and internalized messages work together when individuals self-assess their behavior (Smith, Ellis & Yoo, 2001).

The value-theory research of sociologists has not been widely utilized by media theorists, who have largely focused their work on cognitive psychology and on normative frameworks drawn from philosophical approaches. Black and colleagues (1992) examined how the content of an ethics course alters the value systems of journalism students. Viall (1992) proposed applying a modified Rokeach survey to explore journalistic values, but only in a notably constricted approach. This study adds six values to the list of 18 instrumental values included in the Rokeach Value Survey. Other researchers using the Rokeach Value Survey (Braithwaite & Law, 1985) have noted that the value list does not adequately represent "basic human rights" such as dignity, privacy and protection from harm (p. 260); the values added to the instrument for this study should help to close that gap.

This study explores the suggestion that the conventional applications of philosophical approaches alone do not adequately explain journalistic behavior. Rather, social psychology research suggests that media practitioners operate by constantly reassessing the primacy and relevancy of each within a set of fixed, so-called instrumental values as they are applied to diverse ethical questions. Despite the body of literature, little research has sought to identify the values at work as journalists deliberate over ethical issues. Nor has research attempted to examine the interactive dynamic among these values within various journalistic ethical frameworks in a way that illuminates the decision-making processes of journalists. This study is motivated by the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the value system of journalists?

RQ2: In what ways do journalists' value systems reflect normative ethical frameworks?

RQ3: In what ways do their value systems suggest that journalists have an inadequate grasp of ethical principles?

Method

The survey.

This project is based on a nationwide random-sample survey, stratified by state, of 600 newspaper journalists conducted in early 2002. The individual journalists constitute two groups: newspaper reporters and newspaper editors, with one of each drawn from each newspaper in a stratified random selection.

The number of newspapers needed from each state for proportional representation was calculated, with a target total of 300. A table of random numbers was used to select the established number of newspapers. To prevent the large number of small daily newspapers from being overrepresented, major metro dailies with circulations of 150,000 or more were weighted.

A single middle-tier editor (team editor, metro editor, city editor, etc.) and a single reporter were selected using a table of random numbers applied to each group on each newspaper's staff list. These staff lists are commonly available on newspaper Web sites. Phone calls were made to verify the presence of each selected journalist when necessary.

The survey instrument was paper-based and was mailed. A key characteristic of the original Rokeach Value Survey is its interactive element using adhesive tabs. Each value has its own tab, which respondents manipulate and rank. The modified value survey used for this project mimics this feature as much as possible, using a two-page label sheet. A license to use a modified version of the Rokeach instrument was obtained from Consulting Psychologists Press of Palo Alto, CA. Rokeach found that the value survey, when conventionally presented on paper, had a "somewhat lower" test-retest reliability than the gummed-label version (1973, p. 33).

The initial mailings were sent in mid-January 2002, and the second wave of mailings was sent during the third week of January. Follow-up phone calls to non-respondents were made before the second wave was mailed. The complete instrument was sent in second and subsequent waves. A third wave of mailings was conducted during the first week of February.

The interviews.

To supplement the quantitative data generated by the survey, this study conducted a series of in-depth interviews with a small selection of respondents to flesh out the value motivations and thought processes underlying the survey responses. The survey instrument provides information on the extent to which journalists embrace certain values more tightly than others.

Since the research questions at the heart of this study are concerned with journalists' perceptions of their values and how they articulate the deliberative process, loosely structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method. This decision implies a constructionist approach aimed at discovering, as Silverman said, how subjects actively create meaning (2001, p. 95). *How* journalists struggle to articulate the dynamics of values in their work is presumed to be as important as *what* they actually say about those values.

The interview subjects were selected with the aim of maximizing variability and diversity of perspectives. The values that we hold as individuals are naturally intrinsic to our identity constructions and necessarily reflect our unique experiences, exposures, opportunities and backgrounds. To ensure that interviews encompass the widest possible variety of value perspectives, selection of subjects proceeded so that the broadest possible ranges of ethnic, educational and job-experience backgrounds were sought, while simultaneously maximizing use of travel time and expenses. While the limitations of geographic distribution of respondents, individual consent and availability are acknowledged, the selection of interview subjects also had the aim of achieving a diversity of subjects based on gender, age, newspaper circulation size and journalism experience. The demographic data obtained in the survey instrument were used to help select interview subjects to achieve diversity on all these dimensions. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested, interviews are useful "in conjunction with" other techniques to develop a deeper understanding of how subjects are interpreting and reasoning through their own environments (p. 94).

Fifteen journalists were interviewed at six newspapers of varying sizes in New Jersey, North Carolina and California in March and April 2002. Subjects included veteran reporters and editors as well as some younger subjects new to both capacities.

For this study, the journalists' efforts to come to an understanding of values, their meanings, and their functions, proved as valuable as their literal utterances on the subject. Rather than merely documenting journalists' claims about values or fleshing out the quantitative survey data, the interviews served to explore what Mills (1940) referred to as "vocabularies of motive," and to uncover what Gilbert and Mulkay called "the patterned character of participants' portrayals of action" (1983, p. 24).

Results

The survey: A profile of journalistic values.

The survey elicited 355 usable responses, or a response rate of 59 percent. Respondents ranged from neophyte reporters at small rural papers just on the job for a few months to veteran executive and managing editors at some of the country's largest metro dailies. Of the responses, 171, or 48.2 percent, were from editors of some kind -- executive editors, managing editors, metro editors, business editors and other section editors. Writers and reporters responsible for a variety of beats – general assignment, politics, sports, education, city government, etc. – accounted for 184 of the responses, or 51.8 percent (Table 1).

The results of this study provide an empirical basis that has been lacking in such discussions, offering for the first time a generalizable hierarchy of values of newspaper journalists across the country. This journalistic value profile suggests that, far from working in a moral vacuum, journalists bring to bear a number of morality-based and competency-based values on their everyday ethical decision-making. The resulting value profile appears to be dominated by a concern for journalistic credibility, given the highest-ranked values, including "Honest," "Responsible" and "Fair."

Three respondents did not rank the values but completed other sections of the survey, giving the value rankings a total of 352 valid responses. "Honest" was ranked the most important value by most journalists by far – more than one-third of all journalists ranked it No. 1, and another 62 journalists ranked it at No. 2 (Table 2). More journalists ranked "Honest" in either one of those positions than all other positions combined. "Honest" was followed by "Fair;" roughly half of all journalists placed this value in one of the top three spots. Those two morally oriented values were followed by two values that Rokeach related to the concept of competency: "Responsible" and "Capable." Nearly one-half of the journalists ranked "Responsible" at positions 2 through 5.

When testing his original list of instrumental values on different populations, Rokeach said the average intercorrelation among the rankings for all the instrumental values was -.06, which suggested that each of the values could be considered discrete, valid measures for different concepts. While several of the original values do significantly correlate with each other due to an intrinsic parallelism of the concepts involved (i.e., "Responsible" and "Self-controlled"), the intercorrelations for the rankings of the original values by journalists in this project mirror those of Rokeach. More importantly, the six journalistic-oriented values added by this project also show negligible intercorrelations with averages ranging from -.03 to -.059, which suggest that each of the added values is in fact measuring additional concepts and not simply other dimensions of values already listed.

Just as valuable as the top-ranked values are the middle-rank values. Since research has shown that middle-ranked values "exert little differential effect on behavior" (Mahoney & Pechura, 1980, p. 1009), this can indicate which concepts journalists may give lip service to as valuable but that don't necessarily influence their work. Most notable among the values stuck in the middle of the pack is "Minimizing harm," ranked at No. 14 – one of the six values added by this project to the original list of 18 instrumental values from Rokeach. The fact that journalists consistently refused to rank this value among the most important contradicts the emphasis on minimizing harm in much of the media ethics literature. Only 40 journalists ranked this value among their top five. The same can be said for another of the six added values, "Empathetic," which was ranked just below "Minimizing harm" by journalists at No. 15 (Table 2).

The lowest-ranked values ("Clean," "Loving," "Obedient," "Cheerful" and "Forgiving") understandably have the least relevance for most journalists. Ranked seventh from the bottom is "Civic-minded," another of the six added by this project to the original list of 18 values. The journalists' overall rankings suggest that if the six added values instead *replaced* the bottom-ranked values deemed least relevant to journalists, "Civic-minded" would have been ranked at the bottom. The dismissal of this value by journalists may well be considered a confirmation of the fears of many journalists who argue that taking "community building" as the goal of local journalism amounts to little more than boosterism. However, the low ranking of the value also contradicts some media ethicists (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1987; Christians et al., 1993; Pasquali, 1997) as well as other writers (Fallows, 1997) who argue that the contemporary American media refuse at their peril to embrace a more communitarian outlook. The value label, however, may have triggered possibly negative associations with the controversial practice of civic or public journalism for many respondents.

The interviews: Perceptions and manifestations of values

"There are just certain tenets that you just absolutely have to follow – you have to be accurate and you have to be fair," said John Gryka, deputy managing editor at the Riverside, Calif., *Press-Enterprise*. "And if you don't do that, you're not doing a good job." Gryka's statement could well constitute a mantra of sorts for the journalists who were interviewed. It also reflects and reinforces several of the values that an overwhelming majority of journalists ranked at the top of their lists as survey respondents: "Honest" (No. 1), "Fair" (No. 2) and "Capable" (No. 4). Without prompting, the top half-dozen values dominated much of the interview discussions. Journalists repeatedly talked about the importance of being accurate and of dealing with others – story subjects or sources – in a straightforward way. Both of these are key components of the top-ranked value of "Honest." The journalist's first allegiance must be to the dissemination of accurate information, they said. This claim is critical for the foundation of any journalistic value theory.

The third-ranked value of "Responsible" also surfaced in many different contexts during the interviews. Most notably, journalists often seemed to be trying to verbalize the importance of being responsible when they referred to being guided by a moral or internal "compass." Answerability also is an important component of being responsible; journalists repeatedly acknowledged that they are held to account by their audiences. Often, accountability was expressed in the context of the perennial disconnect between journalists and the public. Audiences may define responsible behavior in ways very different than journalists, yet this fact did not appear to diminish the importance of responsibility for journalists interviewed.

When Daniel Nonte, a reporter at the Greensboro *News & Record*, checked his inclination to dismiss tenants noisily protesting local housing redevelopment plans and took the time to learn about their complaints, he said he was trying to act objectively. But he also was demonstrating the sense of open-mindedness that many journalists likely had in mind while ranking "Broadminded" so highly at No. 5. The ability to sense when other sources of information and perspectives exist and the initiative to seek them out are highly valued among journalists. The value of broadmindedness also was suggested in journalists' discussions about their role as public servants. The "broad middle" range of opinions often is more difficult to get and less sexy as story material, but it is important for good journalism, as Winston-Salem *Journal* reporter John Railey emphasized.

Discussion

Linking the survey results and the interviews.

The value profile raises some important questions about journalists' understanding of several key philosophical concepts that drives many of the claims of media ethicists. The nature of that dynamic of values appears to be an Aristotelian search for moderation, for ways to balance the interests of news subject, reading public and wider community, as the journalists repeatedly indicated in the interviews conducted during this project. At the same time, both the survey and the interviews suggest a "layering" of journalistic values, with the top-ranked values equally supporting an overarching principle of credibility. This layered value structure affirms the conclusion by Williams, who suggested that it is simplistic to view single values as reliable guides to behavior. "More often particular acts or sequences of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values," he said (1968, p. 287). The layered structure of values suggested by this study appears to inform journalistic behavior regardless of any distinction among the types of ethical issues that newspaper journalists commonly face.

Credibility: An overarching principle.

The issue of media credibility continues to preoccupy journalists. Journalism textbooks and academic journal articles continually emphasize the importance of cultivating credibility. In 1998, the American Society of Newspaper Editors launched a major, $1 million "Journalism Credibility Project" designed to identify threats to journalists' credibility and implement strategies at participating newspapers based on the research to "build reader trust" (ASNE, 1998, p. 2).

Concern for credibility also appears to be a subtext of the value rankings of this study. The values that survey respondents ranked at the top of their lists – "Honest," "Fair," "Responsible," "Capable," "Broadminded" and "Just" – all can be considered important components of media credibility. Honesty, fairness, balance and a sense of believability are elements of trust, of a notion that a news organization can be held to account. The standard deviations for all of the six top-ranked values are relatively small, suggesting little disagreement among respondents that they constitute a core set of values (Table 2).

These six thus appear to provide the foundation for a "layering" of journalistic principles; "Honest," "Responsible" and "Capable" can be said to constitute a sense of believability, while "Fair," "Broadminded" and "Just" suggest an idea of balance. The overarching principle of credibility will necessarily rest on all of these to varying degrees (Figure 1). The top-ranked values are essential for the roles they play as components of credibility, and less as isolated factors guiding decision-making – an example of the so-called "clusters of values" to which Williams referred. The standard deviation of "Honest," the top-ranked value, puts it in a category by itself: The difference between the standard deviation of "Honest" and the next value, "Fair," is considerably larger than the differences of the standard deviations of any of the other top six values (Table 2). The profession routinely invokes truthfulness as its gospel, and the survey results, as well as the interview data, reflect this.

An irony of this preoccupation with media credibility is that the concept is not a static one. Journalists cannot simply invoke the top-ranked values in their work and then claim to be credible. The essence of credibility is found in the interaction between the media and the audience. Credibility emerges from the interactive process of communication – of sending messages, having those messages received, and then having the receiver assess or respond to those messages. Thus, credibility is defined not only by the content of what is communicated, but also by the nature of the transmission and of its reception. High media credibility implies a process in which messages are communicated effectively *and* received by an audience that assesses the message – and hence the sender – in a positive way. However, cognitive psychology research has shown that we are liable to mistakenly assess messages – or fail to receive them entirely – through simple inattention, failure to perceive given cues, or an inability to provide a mental context for a projected situation. Gunter (1987) showed that audiences misinterpret news stories if television news segments are poorly packaged. And other research has shown that our memory for information may vary not only with the difficulty of the material, but that different cultural and social groups of people may remember information in different ways.

Thus, conflicting perceptions of credibility by an audience can result in the rejection of a generally "credible" journalist or news organization. This caution should serve to temper journalists' fixation on gaining credibility. While the cultivation of credibility is a valuable goal, its pursuit should not overshadow a journalistic emphasis on service.

Journalistic instrumental-value theory: A prescription

While the survey results and interview data present a much-needed and compelling profile of journalistic values, the intent of this study is to point to ways in which the field of media ethics can move beyond description and to begin building a theory of values that ought to guide journalistic decisions. We have seen what the value hierarchies of journalists actually are and how those values appear to be expressed and embodied in their work. But are these values the appropriate ones to be used to guide behavior and shape decision-making? Are the values on which journalists place the highest priority the right ones? Do some values appear to be mistakenly dismissed, perhaps because of misunderstanding of the philosophical concepts involved?

As has been discussed, the cluster of top-ranked values constitutes critical components of the broader principle of credibility, and, as long as the above-noted cautions are acknowledged, this is appropriate. The credibility of a news organization is the source from which its power and effectiveness stems. To see the importance of credibility so uniformly underscored by journalists nationwide should be gratifying to fellow journalists and skeptical readers alike. However, the fact that values such as "Ambitious," "Imaginative" and even "Capable," generally were ranked above values such as "Independent," "Aboveboard" and "Minimizing harm" suggests that there are several inadequacies in this value profile. The respondents' rankings – and their articulation of values in the interviews – suggest that journalists may have an insufficient grasp of certain key philosophical concepts that should be more prominent in a normative ethic.

The central role of autonomy.

The code of ethics published by the Society for Professional Journalists, coming in at fewer than three pages, is not a lengthy document. But one of the prominent principles is the directive to "act independently." Media ethics textbooks and journals offer numerous case studies to illustrate the damage that occurs when journalistic independence is compromised by certain interests. This independence from interference or influence is clearly fundamental to the idea of credibility that survey respondents appeared to emphasize. If journalists or news organizations are perceived as presenting news and information for the benefit of particular interests, credibility is quickly destroyed. And yet the same survey respondents appeared to dismiss the value "Independent," giving it the inconsequential ranking of 13 out of all the 24 values.

Why would professional journalists, working in a field that often has enshrined individualism and that constantly invokes its autonomy under the First Amendment, give so little weight to the value "Independent?" There may well be diversity in the way journalists define the term. Independent from whom is certainly a legitimate question. If it refers to reporters' autonomy from editors, journalists may well perceive it as much less important than the independence from advertisers or outside political pressures. And in an industry dominated by media conglomerates, how might it be possible to enjoy complete autonomy from one's corporate parent, and exactly what forms would it take? Clearly, journalistic independence encompasses several different dimensions. However, one reason for the relatively low priority placed on the value in this study may be that in general, journalists have an inadequate grasp of the concept of autonomous agency. It is entirely understandable that respondents, if the concept of journalistic credibility was in the forefront of their minds as they considered the list of values to be ranked, gravitated toward values such as "Honest," "Fair" and "Just." If they had given any thought to the notion of journalistic autonomy, they might even have concluded that it was sufficiently implied in the value "Responsible." But, in fact, the philosophical concept of autonomy should be considered of equal importance, and not ancillary, to the concept of responsibility. The two are critically linked, and thus neither can be divorced from the concept of credibility.

Philosophers have long claimed that the concepts of autonomous agency and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. And if the relationship between the two concepts is symbiotic in any way, autonomy must be considered antecedent. Kant explicitly rooted moral responsibility, expressed by the categorical imperative of universalizable action, within autonomous agency (Copleston, 1964, p. 121). Berlin made the link between autonomy and responsibility explicit when he articulated his concept of "positive" freedom, which refers to our ability to shape our own lives based on our own goals and aspirations. Positive freedom, Berlin argued, derives from the wish "to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices" (1969, p. 131). Haydon said a key condition for being a responsible agent is the possession of "certain normal psychological capacities of understanding, reasoning and control" over one's behavior (1978, p. 47). Buchanan even suggested that we have a moral responsibility to appreciate the autonomous agency of individuals *apart from* the effects of their actions, or their state of accountability:

> To a certain extent and within certain limits, to respect a person as a person – as an autonomous chooser of ends and former of beliefs – is to set aside consequentalist considerations in order to give due consideration to the fact that they are *his* beliefs and that it is *he* who is responsible for them (1979, p. 554) [author's emphasis].

More recently, in his landmark work on moral responsibility and obligation, Scanlon argued that our capacity to exist as autonomous beings is what allows us to value freedom of choice. This freedom, consequently, provides the basis for our understanding of moral responsibility:

> Once we understand the positive reasons that people have for wanting opportunities to make choices that will affect what happens to them, what they owe to others, and what others owe to them, we can see also how their having had such opportunities can play a crucial role in determining what they can reasonably object to (1998, p. 251).

What Scanlon refers to as our "judgment-sensitive attitudes" stem from our rational agency, and we are only substantively responsible for our actions when they can be clearly linked to opportunities we have had to make choices.

If survey respondents presumed that ranking the value "Responsible" highly adequately implies the concept of journalistic independence, there is a problem with how journalists have come to understand autonomous agency. Clearly, autonomy is an explicit requirement for responsible action; without it, responsibility is rendered as little more than some vague idea of good behavior whose definition can be manipulated to suit the moment. In a normative ethics, the link must be prominent, explicit and significantly more informed.

Transparent deliberation: An essential goal.

All worthwhile analyses have at least one aspect in common: They never lose sight of the basics of the field on which the analysis is focused. Ethics is fundamentally concerned with our search for quality in our justifications of what we deem "right." It addresses the nature of our deliberation and the strength of the rationales that we arrive at for a given question. In journalism ethics, this is particularly important to keep in mind; in many cases, the final decision to run or not to run a story, to grant anonymity or pass up a source, really does matter less than the justification for the decision. This is because so many such decisions are likely to be endlessly contested. Journalists and their audiences come to the story already equipped with their sense of what's "right."

Our ability to have this debate as rational beings depends on the notion of full disclosure or transparency. This may seem deceptively simple, a mere rhetorical device. But it lies at the heart of what it means to live as moral beings. Bok (1999) argued that when we use deception or stop short of full disclosure in efforts to justify our actions, we fail to treat others with the requisite dignity and respect. We fail as moral beings, in effect. Davis (1991) made a similar case, warning that we risk relying on an unacceptably narrow sense of respecting others if we embrace the claim of deontologists, those who study the nature of moral obligations, that what constitutes a "right" action is intrinsically linked to what is "good" (p. 212). Transparent interaction is what allows us as rational, autonomous beings to assess each other's behavior. Our motivations, aspirations and intents are fully set forth for examination. "Moral communication," McShea wrote, "is possible among us to the extent to which we share … a common view of the facts" (1990, p. 221).

For journalists, working in a perennially adversarial atmosphere and confronted by an often hostile public, transparency is more than an academic platitude; it is an essential element of credibility. Journalistic decisions lack transparency -- and thus undermine the journalist's credibility – when they serve primarily to protect selfish interests or political power, when they are justifications rooted in defensiveness. Journalists who explicitly value transparency demonstrate that they are continually engaged in the process of examining whether their coverage has fully taken into account the interests of all involved in or affected by their coverage. In other words, only through transparent deliberation can we determine whether all the stakeholders have been accounted for, and thus be able to assess whether the interests of each have been fairly weighed.

Good, credible journalism requires transparency on many fronts: with sources, with story subjects and with audiences. Several journalists interviewed acknowledged that people who deal with the press have a legitimate complaint when they feel they have been misled or even deceived about the true intent of a journalist or news organization. Kovach and Rosenstiel even offered what they call "the Rule of Transparency," which is analogous to the scientific method in which tests and results are publicly detailed so that the reliability of the work can be assessed through replication:

> The Rule of Transparency involves the journalist asking for each event, 'What does my audience need to know to evaluate this information for itself? And is there anything in our treatment of it that requires explanation?' (2001, p. 81).

They suggest full disclosure and explanations any time journalists use deceptive practices to get a story, justifying that the significance of the story to the public interest merits deceptive practices, and making sure that such practices are the only means of getting it. Disregard of this need for transparency can have severely damaging results, particularly in the media's use of hidden cameras and other such tactics. "[T]ransparency means embedding in the news reports a sense of how the story came to be and why it was presented the way it was," Kovach and Rosenstiel wrote. Insisting on transparency "will help over the long run to develop a more discerning public. This is a public that can readily see the difference between journalism of principle and careless or self-interested imitation" (p. 83).

Transparent behavior is as much of a mainstay of credibility as honesty and fairness. Respondents who gave the value "Aboveboard" relatively little weight compared with the top-ranked values may not have equated it with the concept of transparency or may have had an insufficient understanding of the concept, which should play a central role in any normative media ethics theory.

Clarifying the mission to minimize harm.

In the Code of Ethics distributed by the Society of Professional Journalists, "Minimize harm" is the second of four directives. However, one of the items listed under this heading has very little to do with "minimizing" anything. The code states: "Recognize that gathering and reporting of information may cause harm or discomfort." This could be taken as a warning for the public about the activities of the journalists in its midst. It also is a call for journalists to think about the different *kinds* of harm that could be posed by their work. Both survey respondents and journalists who were interviewed appear to express a similar ambiguity about what it might mean for journalists to "minimize harm." The SPJ code notwithstanding, the relatively low ranking given to the value "Minimizing harm" by the survey respondents may be appropriate, but the meaning journalists are assigning to this value is unclear. The diversity of perceptions regarding what constitutes harm and what exactly should be done to minimize it clearly needs to be explored before clearer policies can be developed that would be useful to all journalists.

Questions of harm most commonly take the form of how to balance claims of individual privacy with claims to disclose information that is arguably of public interest or some social benefit. Generally, journalists use a welfare utilitarian approach for these kinds of questions: the idea that one must determine what is "right," or of greatest utility, to the broadest number of interests, as opposed to simply gauging the utility of an act according to people's preferences. This is an important distinction and an appropriate one for journalists. But to what degree should journalists base their acts on utilitarian theory? Theorists such as Goodin (1991) have said that it is in the realm of public policy where utilitarianism becomes most useful; it helps us identify the "right" action, which "maximizes utility (however construed) summed *impersonally* across all those affected by that action" (p. 245) [emphasis added]. But this brings us to the dichotomy of the role of journalism in democratic society: It is a practice rooted in the autonomous agency of individual journalists and news organizations, yet it is at least in part a fundamentally communitarian endeavor.

Debate on the particulars of its public-service role continues, but the community-building role has historically been implicit. This dichotomy is complicated by the entrepreneurial priorities of our rights-based society, which often places a premium on the claims of the individual. A residual effect is an overwhelming emphasis on that which benefits the welfare of the individual, which in turn shapes the way journalists perceive the concept of harm. Privacy of the individual often dictates the extent to which journalism's public-service mission is carried out, not the other way around. The results of this study reinforce the notion that, while the evolving concept of privacy is treated largely as a legal question, it should primarily be considered as an issue of ethics.

This apparently irreconcilable conflict between the claims of the individual and claims of the social may be tempered somewhat when journalists resist the demand to focus on the preferences of the individual and rely as much as possible on broader standards to help them define what constitutes harm. When John Gryka of the Riverside *Press-Enterprise* talks of trying to carry out "the better good" by taking the position of "wanting to tell as much as we can," he is referring to the greater weight he assigns to a policy of openness and the cultivation of a democratic forum that is not necessarily constricted by pressures of individual preferences. When Joanne Sills of the Newark *Star-Ledger* says the demands of equal treatment often require journalists to create discomfort by going where they're unwelcome, she, too, is talking about a more sophisticated sense of journalistic utility than is often used. In any utilitarian theory, the interests, or stakeholders, involved must be clearly defined, and this is not always the case with journalists constantly pressured to use the right of personal privacy as the only reference for assessing the potential benefit or harm of an act. A utilitarian theory that rests on philosophical standards of equality and democratic health, consequently, provides the best approach to understanding the nature of the "harm" that journalists should seek to minimize.

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Figure 1. The "layering" dynamic of top-ranked journalistic values as components of the principle of credibility.

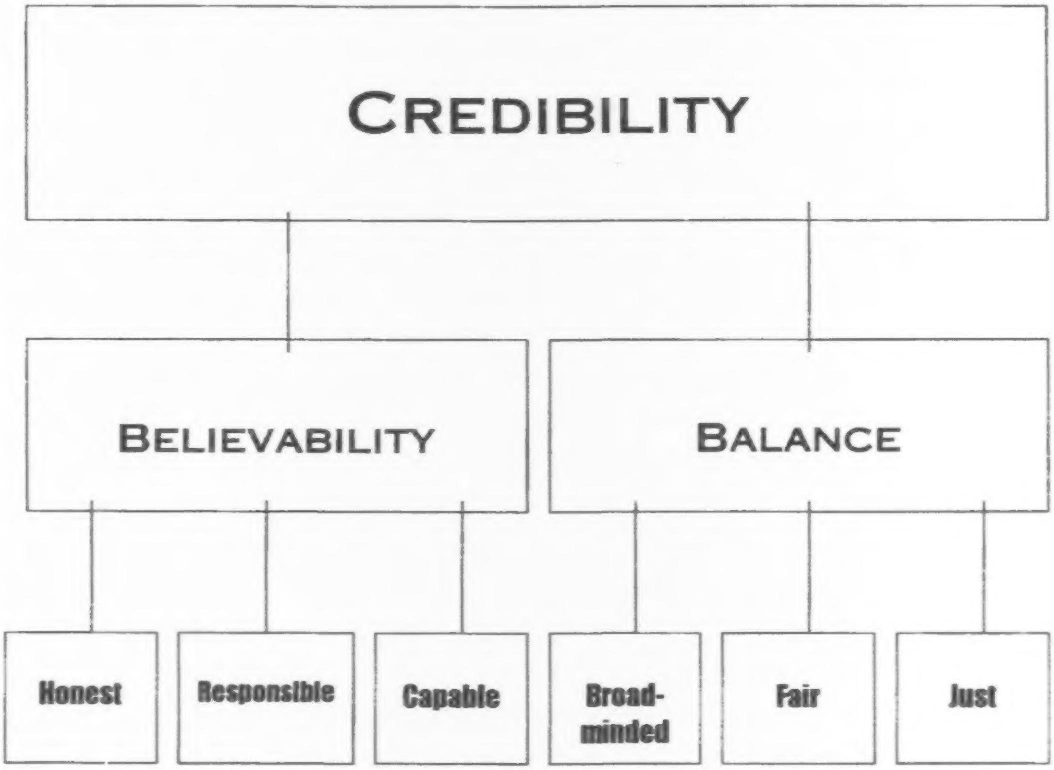
CREDIBILITY
BELIEVABILITY
BALANCE
Honest
Responsible
Capable
Broad-minded
Fair
Just

Table 1. Percentages for newspaper journalists and demographic variables.

Variables	%
Gender	
Female	48.7
Male	51.3
	100%
	(N = 355)
Ethnicity	
White, not of Hispanic origin	94.0
Black, not of Hispanic origin	3.1
Hispanic	1.4
American Indian or Alaskan native	0.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.0
Other/Decline to specify	1.4
	100%
	(N = 355)
Title	
Editor*	48.1
Reporter**	51.9
	100%
	(N = 355)
Did you major in journalism in college?	
Yes	53.0
No	47.0
	100%
	(N = 355)
If not, did part of your education consist in one or more journalism courses?	
Yes	27.0
No	20.3
Left blank	52.7
	100%
	(N = 355)
Did you ever take a college course that was specifically a journalism ethics or media ethics course?	
Yes	40.6
No	59.4
	100%
	(N = 355)

* Category includes titles of editor, managing editor, assistant managing editor, associate editor, city editor, metro editor, sports editor, features editor, business editor, political editor, special projects editor or other section editor.

** Category includes titles of staff writer, politics writer, education writer, city reporter, county reporter, environment writer, transportation writer, sports writer or other beat writer.

Table 2. Instrumental-value rankings of newspaper journalists.

Values	Mean (N = 352)	Standard Deviation
(1) **Honest** (sincere, truthful)	2.93	3.22
(2) **Fair** (treating others as you want to be treated)	4.90	4.17
(3) **Responsible** (dependable, reliable)	6.87	4.46
(4) **Capable** (competent, effective)	7.62	4.77
(5) **Broadminded** (open-minded)	8.45	5.12
(6) **Just** (acknowledging others' rights)	8.77	5.05
(7) **Aboveboard** (transparent, nothing to hide)	9.76	6.74
(8) **Intellectual** (intelligent, reflective)	10.97	5.61
(9) **Logical** (consistent, rational)	11.27	5.04
(10) **Imaginative** (daring, creative)	11.57	5.48
(11) **Ambitious** (hard-working, aspiring)	11.63	6.23
(12) **Courageous** (standing up for your beliefs)	11.70	5.93
(13) **Independent** (self-reliant, self-sufficient)	11.88	5.29
(14) **Minimizing harm** (not exploiting others for your own success)	12.47	5.57
(15) **Empathetic** (caring for others)	13.29	5.60
(16) **Helpful** (working for the welfare of others)	14.04	5.28
(17) **Self-controlled** (restrained, self-disciplined)	14.23	4.76
(18) **Civic-minded** (fostering community)	14.57	5.96
(19) **Polite** (courteous, well-mannered)	14.97	4.85
(20) **Forgiving** (willing to pardon others)	18.00	4.61
(21) **Cheerful** (lighthearted, joyful)	18.24	4.63
(22) **Obedient** (dutiful, respectful)	19.89	4.46
(23) **Loving** (affectionate, tender)	21.01	4.13
(24) **Clean** (neat, tidy)	21.01	3.96

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Media Ethics

Perry Meets Freire:
Moral Development's 'Leap of Faith' in the Classroom

Maggie Jones Patterson
Associate Professor of Journalism

and

Matthew Gropp
Graduate Student
Department of Communicaiton & Rhetorical Studies
340 College Hall
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Submitted to the Media Ethics Division for possible presentation at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national meeting in Kansas City in 2003.

Perry Meets Freire:
Moral Development's 'Leap of Faith' in the Classroom

Abstract

The ways teachers can help students through ethical development are explored by drawing upon William G. Perry's *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* (1970) and, to a lesser extent, Mary F. Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986). The paper argues that the middle stage of moral development, called Realizing of Relativism, is a critical turning point at which students can turn back, freeze in place, or move on to an eventual commitment to ideas and values. In the current cultural climate of individualism, students may have difficulty recognizing the responsibility that lies in individual choice, a responsibility inherent in the rhetorical worldview. The commitment that comes from choice requires a leap of faith. To the extent that this critical developmental transition happens within the classroom, instructors need to react appropriately. We must adjust our role in the classroom from "Authority" to "guide" in a mutual exploration of ideas. We have to recognize relativism as a legitimate developmental stage and encourage the kind of questioning of cultural assumptions that nudges students to connect ideas and actions, choices and responsibility, theory and the real world. Such connections help students move from the stage of Realizing of Relativism to that of Evolving of Commitment.

Perry Meets Freire:
Moral Development's 'Leap of Faith' in the Classroom

Introduction

Aristotle reminds us that learning to be a virtuous moral agent requires special training. Ethical habits are not automatically ingrained, any more than speech is. With speech, neurologists and linguists have established that the human brain's readiness for language and grammar requires socialization—i.e., deliberate imitation and education—for their actual acquisition. If a child does not acquire speech at critical stages in his or her development, the resulting loss may never be fully recovered.[1] Similarly, this paper will argue, young adults pass through critical stages in their moral development. At these stages, their moral development requires socialization—i.e. deliberate imitation and education—if they are to mature into ethical, responsible, and constructive citizens. While responsibility for this socialization lies with a number of social institutions, e.g. the family and the church, discussion is limited here to the part played by the educational process. This paper will explore why the middle stage of moral development is the most critical one and how instructors can help to guide students through and beyond it.

If undergraduate education works properly, young people are nudged up the spiral of moral and intellectual development as they progress through the liberal arts curriculum. They move, as William G. Perry (1970) traces their progress, through nine Positions divided into the following stages:

- The **Modifying of Dualism** (Positions 1, 2, and 3) in which the student moves from seeing the world in polar right-or-wrong terms to beginning to accept diversity and uncertainty as legitimate but temporary.

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[1] Ages one and a half to three and a half are generally acknowledged to be a critical stage for language acquisition in children. Another milestone passes at puberty, when human ability to acquired language drops considerably. In severe cases of speech depravation, such as that documented in *Genie* (Rymer, 1993), the brain's speech center can become irretrievably atrophied. Thus, the physical development of this brain center requires socialization—i.e., hearing, imitating, and learning speech.

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- The **Realizing of Relativism** (Positions 4, 5, and 6) in which the student moves from accepting the legitimacy of uncertainty and diversity of opinion to seeing all knowledge and values as contextual and relativistic and beginning to orient him/herself within that world
- The **Evolving of Commitment** (Positions 7, 8, and 9) in which the student makes an initial commitment to belief in some area and explores the implications of that commitment for her/his life.

(See Appendix A for an elaboration of Perry's schema.) Students pause at each Position and orient themselves to a new way of thinking. That pause, which may appear permanent to them, is interrupted when revelations disrupt the epistemological paradigm with which they have been approaching learning. They question what they have known and become disoriented. Like children whose clothes suddenly are riding up their calves and pinching at their armpits, they sense that their old thinking habits no longer fit. In most cases, they adjust the paradigm to accommodate the new insights and consequently are able to stretch themselves toward the next Position on the hierarchy.[2]

The process is plagued by growing pains, of course. As dualistic thinkers move from believing that knowledge is fixed to admitting to doubt, they trade comfortable surety for disturbing uncertainty. But as the doubt spreads, they are essentially letting out their seams rather than completely replacing old garments. However, the ultimate acceptance of complete relativity and the recognition that all knowledge is constructed can leave students feeling as if they are on unsteady flooring. At this pause in development—called the Realizing of Relativism—disorientation is often acute and vulnerability high. Here, more than at other stages of development, students are likely to accept absolute relativism as a permanent intellectual escape or to retreat back to the comfort of black-and-white

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[2] Although moral development may look like a straight line on paper, Perry found students' progress on it more closely resembled a spiral. As students progressed to a new Position, they sometimes returned to earlier ways of thinking but on a new level. That is, as they came around the spiral and returned to the earlier Position, their thinking was more sophisticated, and they were more self-aware.

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dualism.[3] Those who do the former become unbending dogmatists. Those who do the latter often hide their confusion behind a defensive wall of cynicism.

Thus, Perry identifies his Positions 4 (Multiplicity), 5 (Relativism), and 6 (Commitment Foreseen) as increments in one particularly critical developmental stage: the Realizing of Relativism. In this transition, students' whole orientation to learning must shift if they are to accept relativity and begin to embrace a commitment within it. Belenky et al. (1986) make observations similar to Perry's. While studying women students, in contrast to Perry's all-male sample at Harvard in the 1950s and 1960s, Belenky et al. identified a middle level of development, which the researchers called the Subjectivist Knower. At this stage, women insistently based their thinking in the veracity of their own experiences. They accepted relativism on the basis that others' experiences might differ. The Subjectivist Knower, they found, reasoned "from the gut," and she did not budge readily from her insistent multiplicity to an orientation of the self to a larger world.[4] (See Appendix B for an elaboration of Belenky et al.'s schema.)

In elaborating on this middle stage, the Realizing of Relativism, as a critical development passage, this paper will argue three points:

1. that the current cultural climate exacerbates the dangers of escape or retreat at this stage because prevailing attitudes can block students' visions of commitment and encourage their escape into cynicism or retreat to dualism;

2. that the commitments needed to move beyond this stage require adoption of a rhetorical worldview, one which accepts responsibility as inescapable part of choice; and

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[3] In this retreat, students are not merely revisiting an earlier way of thinking while still climbing up the spiral of moral development. Instead, they are insistently retrenching in an earlier Position.

[4] Comparisons between the Perry and Belenky et al. studies are somewhat difficult. While Belenky et al. did set out, in part, to answer Perry's all-male study with one that looked at moral and intellectual development in women, the methodologies of the two studies vary widely. Perry did a longitudinal study of male Harvard undergraduates as they progressed through their four years of study. Belenky et al. took a "snapshot" of women where they found them and made no claim that the steps the researchers identified were a ladder on which their subjects climbed. The women researchers also broadened their sample in both age and class by including "students" from a range of educational programs from those offered by social service agencies to community colleges and exclusive, four-year colleges.

[5] Perry capitalizes these terms as if they were proper nouns as a way to designate how absolute such concepts are in the minds of the young men who hold them. As he describes his subjects' recognition of relativity and complexity, Perry switches to lower case for the same words

3. that students must embrace their commitments with a courageous and blind leap of faith that will engage their hearts and spirits in addition to their heads.

To the extent that this critical developmental transition happens within the classroom, instructors need to react appropriately. We must adjust our role in the classroom from "Authority"[5] to "guide" in a mutual exploration of ideas. We have to recognize relativism as a legitimate developmental stage and encourage the kind of questioning of cultural assumptions that nudges students to connect ideas and actions, choices and responsibilities, theory and the real world. Such connections help students move from the Realizing of Relativism to the Evolving of Commitment.

The upper-level undergraduate applied ethics course is a likely place to encounter students who experiencing that shaky ground feeling that characterizes Perry's Positions 4, 5, and 6. Students' movement from relativism—and its frequent side effect of cynicism—to their own commitment to a belief system is required for more than just their education and maturity. It is also the only way they will be able to accept fully the yoke of constructive citizenship in a democratic society.

The Middle Stage: The Realizing of Relativism

The cultural climate

This paper's first argument is that the current cultural climate can make it difficult for students to move through and beyond the middle developmental passage: the Realizing of Relativism. Instead, they can stay in this stage, embracing relativism with a cynical shrug, or they can fall prey to a fundamental ideology and regress into thinking with black-and-white surety.

Public rhetoric—in popular culture and politics, etc.—is simultaneously expressive and constitutive of the "taken for granted stocks of knowledge" (Schultz, 1964, p. 282) that construct the current social reality. The social reality shifts in time and place. During World War II, for example, Americans by and large shared a unifying narrative about

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themselves and their mission. As individuals, families and a nation, Americans were sacrificing for the war effort. That story of "who we are and what we are about" bridged the public and private worlds. After World War II, the Nuremberg trials called for a reassertion of individual conscience against the rabid nationalism that had produced Nazi atrocities. At the same time, a therapeutic model encouraged individual self-esteem and fulfillment after a period of war and economic depression had demanded so much selflessness and obedience (Patterson & Hall, 1998). Individualism, always a key ingredient of American thinking, took hold with a vengeance.

No clear narrative prevails in America now. Instead both public and private discourse focus on the self, and as a result, the boundaries between public and private blur. While democracies characteristically vacillate in dialectic tension between the conflicting concerns of the individual and the common good, this current sticking of the pendulum is variously described as rampant individualism (Elshtain, 1995; Glendon, 1991; Sennett, 1977) , cultural narcissism (Lasch, 1979) , emotivism[6] (MacIntyre, 1981), and the therapeutic culture[7] (Rieff, 1966). The pull of the common good has weakened. Instead of active citizenship, Elshtain (1995) laments; we have the "politics of displacement" (pp. 37-63). While these politics resemble an authentic democratic process, they are actually "a dynamic that connects and interweaves public and private imperatives in a way that is dangerous to the integrity of both [because] private values, exigencies and identities come to take precedence in all things, including public involvement as a citizen" (p. 40). Elshtain depicts two ways that the politics of displacement function: "In the first, everything private . . . becomes grist for the public mill. In the second, everything public . . . is privatized and played out in a psychodrama on a grand scale" (p. 38). The atmosphere created is one in which the dialectic between the self and the community has snapped (Patterson & Hall, 1998).

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[6] Emotivism is a form of privatized truth in which behavior is based on feelings, decisions on personal preference and judgments on private standards. Fruitful public dialogue is impossible when emotivism prevails because all argument is based on private conviction—not evidence or public narrative—and only one's personal opinion is recognized as legitimate.

[7] 'Therapeutic culture' refers here to the overextension of therapeutic methods—such as focus on self, empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard and unrestrained expression of feelings—outside the private psychoanalytic setting and into the public vocabulary. Widespread acceptance of such habits has exacerbated individualism and emotivism. Arnett (1995) has called the misuse of therapeutic communication a "moral *cul de sac.*"

As Belenky and her colleagues began their research in moral development during the 1970s, they found that a surprisingly large number of the subjects they interviewed situated their reasoning almost entirely within themselves and their own experiences as they wrestled with ethical decisions. "Of the 135 women we interviewed, almost half were predominantly subjectivists in their thinking" (1986, p. 55). These women—whom the researchers call Subjectivist Knowers—appeared to be preoccupied with personal choices between the self and other, for example, a decision to end a relationship or reject further obligations to family members (pp. 76-77). The researchers cite a cultural climate of self-indulgence as partial explanation for this prevalence of insistent relativism among the sampled women:

> During the 1970s there was a widespread cultural sanction of self-indulgence, self-actualization, and opportunism. Promotion of self was in vogue and assumed the status of a new social phenomenon, being tagged a symptom of the 'me-decade' by Tom Wolfe (1976) and the "cult of narcissism" by Christopher Lasch (1979). The time was ripe for the development of subjectivist thought and the severance of ties and responsibilities to others (p. 78).

These views continue to receive wide support in the public rhetoric of 21st Century America. While speculation about the causes of this cultural climate vary, many explanations focus on the diminished quality and influence of public discourse. Narrow self interests and private concerns still dominate both public and private discussion. The habit of self-focus, which characterizes the lower levels of ethical development, makes it unlikely that individuals will ask the questions about social welfare that produce ethical maturity and an ability to formulate rhetoric appropriate for social discourse rather than personal opinion. At the level of social construction, a cultural preoccupation with the language of psychotherapy and personal conviction also makes it difficult for America's increasingly diverse population to agree on virtues that can constitute a common public narrative. Such a shared narrative is needed to enable public discourse to move beyond personal concerns to issues of social welfare and social responsibility (Lasch, 1979, pp. 28-29).

While the focus on self-interest can encourage cynicism and an embrace of relativism, another cultural trend can revive students' earlier beliefs in absolutism. The latter trend can be seen in the tendency of some politicians, religious leaders, and journalists to bifurcate political debate on public issues into two, mutually exclusive, pro-and-con sides. J. D. Hunter's *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991) and E. J. Dionne's *Why Americans Hate Politics* (1991) cite abortion, gun control, and crime issues as examples of the trend. An either/or, pro-and-con framing of these issues suggests that divergent views are irreconcilable and combatants must fully align with one and reject the other. No shades of gray are admitted. However, higher levels of moral reasoning are characterized by the ability to accept gray areas and dynamic tensions. In fact, the struggle with dialectical tension—to strive for the unity of contraries (Buber, 1966) —signals both a level of maturity that is lacking in abstract, all-or-nothing claims and an openness to dialogue that acknowledges ambiguity and complexity (Arnett, 1986).

In the current cultural climate, therefore, students will not readily find models of sophisticated moral reasoning that they can learn from and imitate. Their socialization into the next moral stage of recognizing the need for commitment is by no means automatic. On the contrary, they find ample reinforcement for staying put or turning back. In the 1950s and 1960s, William G. Perry identified the tendency of students to escape the next step to commitment in these ways. The current cultural climate makes that escape all the more likely.

The rhetorical worldview

Our second argument states that students need to embrace a rhetorical worldview if they are to move beyond the middle stage of relativism. A rhetorical worldview accepts responsibility as an intrinsic part of adjusting to a relativistic world and thereby enables the commitment that characterizes the higher stages of moral development.

If American, post-modern society encourages excessive individuality, it also, paradoxically, assumes that these individuals take part in the forming of that society; so society becomes a dialectical product of society producing people and people producing society. As Peter Berger (1967) states:

> The individual is not molded as a passive, inert thing. Rather he is formed in the course of a conversation (a dialectic, in the literal sense of the word) in which he is a *participant*. That is, the social world (with its appropriate institutions, roles, and identities) is not passively absorbed by the individual, but actively *appropriated* by him (p. 18).

Berger understands this balance between the individual and society: "The success of socialization depends upon the establishment of symmetry between the objective world of society and the subjective world of the individual" (1967, p. 15). Life must move on rather than be overwhelmed by the reality that answers will not be made clear and all possible answers will not be agreed on. The mature adult world is nudged forward by the necessity to choose and commit rather than publicize the private perspective and privatize the public perspective.

Such choice crafts a true individual and not just a Dionysian animal that acts on personal desires and biases. The rhetorical worldview arises from the results of human choices and decisions so that those who have made those choices and decisions bear the responsibility for them (Barrett, 1987, p. 39-40). It is the view that we have no access to any superhuman criteria that will enlighten us; nor are we guided by our own absolute relativistic "truths," which only reflect a single perspective of reality and the world (Grassi, 1980). Varying perspectives, places, and time periods have called for different choices, different decisions, and different "truths" that have been arrived at by persuasion (Foucault, 1969). Those choices and decisions, which lead to "truths," are not handed down on Mount Sinai but are actions that bear responsibility upon those who make them. It is the responsibility one holds in choosing and acting, in respect to other individuals, that makes the rhetorical worldview ethical in nature. It is the view that individualism is not merely a right, but a responsibility to what individuals choose as it affects society. Rollo May, recognizing the importance of choice and commitment, states: "But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day to day" (May, 1975, p. 5).

Unfortunately, like individuality itself, the rhetorical worldview can be psychologized into absolute relativism, while ignoring the socially constructive implications. The rhetorical worldview is much more than a call for mediation among varying cries of: "Me. Me. Me." Acting on belief and taking responsibility for that action defined the citizen in ancient Greece, according the Sophistic view of Democracy. With their emphasis on responsibility, the Sophists strove to counter Plato's fears that Democracy would devolve into a self-centered Mobocracy.

When narcissism hides behind the justification of individuality, that responsibility of action evaporates and the foundation for a rhetorical worldview crumbles. Today, students have grown up in a world in which boundaries between public and private self have collapsed because the rules that once bound the public sphere have been condemned as artificial and constricting. Instead, they have been replaced by the interpersonal rules that formerly governed private lives (Lasch, 1979, p. 27). Public faces are now seen as mere reflections or masks of our private ones, and public disagreement becomes a private grudge match; therefore, public debate, which should be resolved through impersonal meaning, instead remains at a standoff (Sennett, 1977, p. 5). Public matters of choice and decision making, as the Sophists and Founding Fathers had envisioned them, devolve instead into food fights between hotheads who are intolerant of other viewpoints.

Leap of faith

The third argument about the nature of the middle stage of moral development is that students' growth beyond it requires them to take a blind and frightening leap of faith into a commitment (or commitments) whose implications cannot be fully foreseen. At each of the nine Positions in Perry's hierarchy, students must experience a sense of being lost before they can reorient themselves at the next higher level. Moving from Position 5 to Position 6, they reach the pinnacle of the crisis that characterizes the middle stage.

At Position 6, they begin to recognize the necessity of commitment. They begin to develop their own ideas; they plant their faith. Faith is not believing without doubt, but in spite of doubt (May, 1975, p. 14). It is trust that there is something transforming in life. *Credo*, or "I believe," has its roots in a broader meaning in Latin: *to give of your life, your love* (Armstrong, 2002). Perry uses religious language in describing this transformation, although he makes it clear that the leap of faith need not be religious. Nonetheless, religious figures provide some of the strongest examples for taking the frightening step into the unknown that we all must risk—albeit in smaller and humbler ways—if we are to reach real maturity. Abraham and Jesus are models of men who stepped into the darkness led by faith. So are Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela.

The manner in which these powerful figures embraced this leap of faith was by looking beyond themselves and making a commitment to a larger cause. As age-old sages have said: *We are most fully ourselves when we give ourselves away* (Armstrong, 2002). The Relativist, whom Perry describes at Position 5, and Subjectivist Knower, who Belenky et al. say finds meaning only in her own life, must step outside their own experience to ultimately find its meaning. Multiplicity must give way to judgment and commitment.

The instructor's role

One paradox of Position 6 is that the student simultaneously reaches inside to discover what "I" know and "I" value (Erickson, 1959) and looks outside to situate "myself" in the larger world. In Position 6, students reach toward their adult identities.

They construct who they want to become—as a person, a professional, and a citizen—and they commit to that vision even though they cannot see it clearly.

Education as Dialogue

If we as instructors are going to help students to make this leap of faith, we must let them go, and the students must be able to see the instructors in a new way: Not as the Authority they relied on for the Right Answers when they engaged in dualistic thinking. Now they must see us as a guide. We guide them to *their* own sense of commitment without imposing *our* own belief system on them, even though we inevitably speak from a cultural standpoint. As Joseph Boyle has written: "[M]oral reasoning seems to be an aspect of morality in which education is possible without either indoctrination or unreasonable imposition of values" (1986, p.165).

As students climb across Position 5, we can guide them to see that some things are probably wrong for good reasons, and some are probably right for good reasons, and some are uncertain for *certain* reasons. The world is neither Absolute nor Relative; it is contextual. Students need to situate themselves within it with supported opinions and arguments along with shared meanings within a community. We need to think of our classrooms as communities of learners who set out upon a quest together. The dangerous part of rallying arguments—in a research paper, for example—to support what "I" know is that it can lead back to the slippery slope of relativism. In a dialogue, we are challenged to move beyond reasoning from our gut.

Students struggle with discontinuities at this middle stage (as well as all other stages) by asking questions. When questions are raised, ideas that arise from those questions will be recognized, and connecting belief to the self will form a path from question to answer. But in order for discourse to open and questioning to begin at this stage, students' belief and trust in Authority has to be compromised, although not diminished nor exterminated. This compromise is not a revolt against authority because authorities themselves must play a role in this compromise. Learning takes place through dialogue. Paulo Freire in

Learning to Question (1989) puts forth this concept and students' possible resistance to it:

> Thus, when you put forward the idea that truth lies in the quest and not in the result, hat it is a process, and thus we should engage in it and achieve it through dialogue, through breaking with the past – that it is not accepted by the majority of students, who are used to the teacher, the wise man, having the truth, hierarchically, and thus do not accept dialogue (p. 32).

Students may be unwilling to accept the relativism they perceive in authority and may feel that they are receiving an aimless and flaky education or that the teachers are imposing their own prejudices and biases on the student (Freire, 1987, p. 80; Perry, 1970, p. 99). Furthermore, students who have been dependent on Authority to structure their development might perceive a dialogical education in which they participate in their own formation as *not* rigorous (Freire, 1987, p. 77). The students' trust in a dialogic type of education has to be won, helping them to understand that the teacher does not have the truth to impose, but rather has questions to raise and ideas to put forth--ideas that have been arrived at through the rigorous answering of raised questions (Freire 1989, p. 34-35). For ideas to arise, rigorous thought must be engaged. For rigorous thought to arise, questions need to be raised. The "questioning" step in learning is crucial: "If you produce answers as if all knowledge consisted of them, were already given, were absolute, you are leaving no room for curiosity or discovery of fresh elements" (Freire, 1989, p. 35).

According to Perry's schema, students' progress requires them to grapple between the extremes of Absolutism and Relativism and ultimately to reject both. One purpose we should hope for in our classrooms is that we can find grounding and commitment in the ways we teach ethics in order to help our students find grounding and commitment in the ways they live their lives. Exploring case studies of real ethical dilemmas, for example, can force students to see problems from different perspectives. Properly explored, they can raise questions, create dialogue, and connect the theoretical to the practical.

Education as praxis

For Freire, who writes about the education of dispossessed adults in Brazil, raising questions in education is an act of political liberation. The lack of questions, he states, may be the result of the separation of authority from non-authority. It becomes a separation of two realities in which intellectuals believe that common people do not *understand* the nature of things, and common people believe that intellectuals do not *feel* the nature of things. Freire (1989) believes the two conceptions need to be fused for a better conception of reality, understanding and feelings:

> To the critical understanding of reality must be added sensitivity to reality, and to attain this sensitivity or develop it they [intellectuals] need communion with the masses. Intellectuals need to discover that their critical capacity is neither greater nor less worthy than the sensitivity of the people. Both are required for an understanding of reality (p. 29).

This separation is a two-way street on which "the masses" don't believe anything intellectual because it is not practical, and intellectuals don't believe anything practical because it is not thought through intellectually. This separation can be detected in ivory-tower academics that "occupy themselves with high-sounding words and descriptions of ideas, rather than with a critical understanding of the real world which, instead of being simply described, has to be changed" (Freire, 1989, p. 6). Praxis, a concept from ancient Greece that brings theory to bear on action, makes a communion of the intellectual with the practical in a search for knowledge that includes both *understanding* and *feeling*. "The action of men without objectives, whether the objectives right or wrong, mythical or demythologized, naïve or critical, is not praxis, though it may be orientation in the world" (Freire, 1985, p. 44). This concept of education as praxis respects ideas and the power that those ideas carry; ideas gain momentum and take concrete shape when they are put into the actions of daily life (Freire, 1989, p. 26). It is also important to maintain moderation and not combat one extreme by slipping into the other. "Praxis is only possible where objective-subjective dialectic is maintained" (Freire, 1985, p. 69).

Praxis is the door that swings back and forth between knowledge and action, theory and practice, intellect and emotion, detachment and engagement. For students teetering on the edge of Commitment in the journey to maturity, unlocking this door is key to allowing the connections to be made between the classroom and the their life decisions. Education at this stage is no longer an exercise to please the teacher/Authority. It has become the very stuff of life.

Ethicist and theologian Albert Jonsen (1991) provides a metaphor for detachment and engagement as contrasting modes in ethics.[8] High above the earthly terrain, the ethical theorist charts the moral roadways below, like a cartographer riding in a hot air balloon. Far below, the bicyclist encounters these roads quite differently—with a sweaty, heart-pounding sense of immediacy, as Preston Covey (1993) unfolds Jonsen's metaphor. To the bicyclist, peddling over rough and winding roads, it is hard to appreciate the detached view from a balloon.

Theory, from some students' perspectives, lives only in the head and that head, like the balloonist, is up in the clouds. Like the cyclist, students find credence in the old proverb: *A ship of theory often sinks when launched upon a sea of facts.* Yet, the cyclist needs the cartographer's map if s/he wants to arrive at a destination rather than meandering aimlessly.

The instructor then must teach the skills of map reading that bridge the airy distance between detachment and engagement. Integration of reflection and emotion, theory and application, balloonist and bicyclist, requires a more complex, higher order thinking than dispassionate analysis by the light of ethical theory alone (Covey, 1993).

Hot-air lectures fuel balloon rides. Engagement requires greater connection with the earth. The instructor negotiates the space between by both getting the student on the bike and convincing him/her to read the map to chart a course.[9] Charting a course means that students begin to make a connection between the choices in their own lives and the

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[8] Detachment is a function of the head. Engagement is a function of the head, heart and viscera. Detachment characterizes the theoretical turn in ethics, the examination of moral reasoning at some distance. Engagement, on the other hand, typifies our first-hand encounters with the moral world.

[9] Discussion here remains primarily theoretical because of space limitations. Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that students can become engaged in the theory of ethics when instructors use such tools as case studies, their own life decisions.

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larger world of knowledge and social politics. Making those connections allows them to recognize commitment and begin to explore its implications.

The importance of bringing feeling into concert with understanding and practical application under the wing of theory is addressed in Belenky et al. These dialectics are critical to the Constructed Knowers, those at the highest stage of development in which women begin "an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others… weaving together the strands of rational and emotive thought and… integrating objective and subjective knowing" (p. 135). This objective-subjective dialectic then is the basis for what has been discussed in Perry's necessity to personally commit, Berger's view of individuals' relationship with society, the rhetorical worldview, and Belenky et al.'s highest stage.

Constructive citizens

Democracy's curse of struggling with diverse perspectives is also its greatest blessing, of course. And it is not one limited to formal debate in the House and Senate. The push by individual voices to be indulged has become an integral part of American culture (or cultures). Democracy's tolerance for individualism exceeds that of a totalitarian state, yet its social organization still places limits on individuals and requires some forms of social solidarity (Haiman, 2000, p. 18). A culture or community based exclusively on a maxim of individuality constantly boils over in conflict. Concern for the common good has to lower the temperature. Here lies a paradox: America's individualism tolerates outliers who sever all alliances with the very communities, institutions, and government that have allowed and encouraged that individualism. But the political and cultural tension between the needs of the individual and the concerns for the common good must be maintained lest the individual overshadows the community. Christopher Lasch points with some cynicism to this possibility when he writes: "Americans have not really become more sociable and cooperative… they have merely become more adept at exploiting the conventions of interpersonal relations for their own benefit" (Lasch, 1979, p. 66). Absolute relativism and absolute emotivism can arise from the extreme individualistic practice of embracing only what benefits the self and thus ignoring forms of social solidarity that are required by democracy. The dialectical tension between the self and the group must be balanced for an individual, as well as a culture, to mature.

Political philosophers from the Greeks onward generally see the curbing of self-interest to the interest of the community as the same *conditio sine qua non* that psychologists see it for the developing young adult. Absolute relativism may be an unwanted side effect of becoming an individual, but it is also part of the journey, especially for young people growing up in a world full of choices. Research on the intellectual and ethical development of both men and women has recognized the relativistic stages as part of the process of development. Perry's research on men and Belenky and her colleague's research on women both recognize the necessity of going through a phase of intense self focus in order to know and shape that self and eventually to reach a higher level of thinking and understanding (Perry, 1970, p. 109; Belenky et al., 1986, p. 68). However, for instructors, guiding young minds away from the negative side effects becomes difficult when "being guided" is associated with "being told what to think," and hence not being an individual at all. Perry recognizes that some students view teachers as "imperialistically extending their biases and prejudices over the underdog's rightful freedom" (Perry, 1970, p. 99). Instructors, then, face the daunting task of helping their students discover their individuality while also grounding it in something larger than their own self-interest, rather than becoming some Dionysian animal. Indeed, a Dionysian animal might emerge from a maxim of individuality and hinder attempts to form an individuality based in choice and commitment rather than merely personal circumstance and emotion. A maxim of individuality can create a monster, but at the same time that monster—or at least its relativistic view of the world—is essential to the development of an ethical person.

Absolute emotivism may be another unwanted side effect of individualism. Impartiality or the ability to separate oneself personally from the argument for the possible betterment of the many is not inherent in individualism. Justice is blindfolded in order to weigh individual pleadings on the scales of society's common law. Individualism cannot be used to justify absolute affective states. The former does not excuse the latter. On the other hand, personal emotions and biases can never be wiped away from people's thought processes. They are an important part of our character, which may overtake us at certain stages of development (Belenky, 1986, p. 135; Gaff, 1991, p. 181).

Paradoxically absolute relativism and absolute emotivism rob individualism of its most fundamental characteristic: choice. The person who acts on a basis of emotions or a tunnel vision perspective is no more individual than someone who is blinded by ideology. Historically, Americans have championed individualism as a means to allow citizens to choose their destinies and to decide together the destiny of the nation. The art of democracy lies in the balance of those interests, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau recognizes: "The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remains as free as before" (Rousseau, 1762/1999, p. 358). Rousseau's resolution, his social compact, states in essence: "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole" (Rousseau, 1762/1999, p. 359). The "general will" of modern day America lies in individualism, yet it is individualism grounded in choice and responsibility for that choice to the community. What John Locke calls the "Fundamental Law of Nature" directs people to preserve the well being of others' lives, health, and possessions as long as one's own preservation is not compromised; Daryl Koehn's reaches beyond Locke's mutual respect and autonomy to add a "world creating ideal," which is to care for other creatures (Locke, 1690/1999, p. 349; Koehn, 1998, p. 23). The absolute relativists and absolute emotivists may be on the road to becoming individuals based in choice, but they are certainly not individuals in the ideal sense until they have done so. The "general will" of individualism is not a justification but a responsibility to oneself and to others. Perry's schema requires commitment in order to move beyond relativism while not losing sight of its lessons. The realization of responsibility through choice comes from the open-ended-ness of commitment as Toni-Lee Capossela recognizes in reference to Perry's scheme: "For Perry, intellectual adulthood is marked by the ability to live with uncertainty and lack of closure… commitment is meaningful only if it is undertaken with the understanding that it may have to be abandoned, adjusted or transferred at any moment" (1993, p. 55). To live with commitment and simultaneously with uncertainty, a lack of closure, and the possibility that change may be necessary brings individuals to the awareness of the responsibility they have to respond to society. The choice required by that responsibility crafts an individual person and lifts him or her above the self-indulgent Dionysian.

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Appendix A
Perry's Schema

Position 1-*Basic Duality*: Authorities know, and if we work hard, read every word, and learn Right Answers, all will be well.

Position 2-*Multiplicity Pre-legitimate*: True Authorities must be Right, the others are frauds. We remain Right. Others must be different and Wrong. Good Authorities give us problems so we can learn to find the Right Answer by our own independent thought.

Position 3-*Multiplicity Subordinate*: Some uncertainties and different opinions are real and legitimate *temporarily,* even for Authorities. They're working on them to get to the Truth.

Position 4a-*Multiplicity (Solipsism) Coordinate*: Where Authorities don't know the Right Answers, everyone has a right to his own opinion; no one is wrong!

Position 4b-*Relativism Subordinate*: In certain courses Authorities are not asking for the Right Answer; They want us to *think* about things in a certain way, *supporting* opinion with data. That's what they grade us on.

Position 5-*Relativism (Contextual) Generalized*: Then *all* thinking must be like this, even for Them. Everything is relative but not equally valid. You have to understand how each context works. Theories are not Truth but metaphors to interpret data with. You have to think about your thinking.

Position 6-*Commitment Foreseen*: I see I'm going to have to make my own decisions in an uncertain world with no one to tell me I'm Right.

Position 7-*Initial Commitment*: Well, I've made my first Commitment!

Position 8-*Orientation in Commitments*: I've made several commitments. I've got to balance them—how many, how deep? How certain, how tentative?

Position 9-*Evolving Commitments*: This is how life will be. I must be wholehearted while tentative, fight for my values yet respect others, believe my deepest values right yet be ready to learn. I see that I shall be retracting this whole journey over and over—but, I hope, more wisely.

(Perry, 1981; 1970)

Appendix B
Belenky's Schema

Silent Women: Women on the bottom rung of the ladder; they tend to see life in terms of polarities. "*Silent* women have little awareness of their intellectual capabilities. They live selfless and voiceless—at the behest of those around them. External authorities know the truth and are all-powerful" (1986, p. 34). These women feel they cannot learn from others and have no voice of their own.

Received Knowledge-*Listening to Others*: Women at this level listen to others as authorities for direction as well as information. The women do not see these authorities as being like themselves, but as separate beings who hold power over them. These authorities define right and wrong on issues without gray areas. Paradox is inconceivable.

Subjective Knowledge-*Inner Voice*: Women at this level see truth as subjectified and personal. External Authority is doubted; truth is intuitive. "Occasionally women distinguish between truth as *feelings* that come from within and *ideas* that come from without" (1986, p. 68).

Subjective Knowledge-*Quest for Self*: Women at this level walk away from the past with a new sense of power in their intuitive process. They begin to assert authority and autonomy and forge new rules and boundaries for relationships, often disregarding claims of others.

Procedural Knowledge-*Voice of Reason*: Women at this stage realize that personal experience and intuitions can deceive. Knowledge is seen as a process honed and developed by authorities; knowing requires careful observation and analysis. The possibility of knowing things outside one's own experience allows new respect for expertise that can be exaggerated.

Procedural Knowledge-*Separate and Connected Knowing*: This stage takes two forms. Women in *Separate Knowing* embrace critical thinking and doubt the word of others; they are guided by methods of science and logic in respect to humanity. Women in *Connected Knowing* are guided by empathy; they are guided by meaning of historical and personal events.

Constructed Knowledge-*Integrating Voices:* Women on the highest rung of the ladder; they begin to integrate knowledge that they feel intuitively is important with knowledge learned from others; combining the rational and emotive, the objective and subjective.

(Belenky et al., 1986).

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